

# PLAIN LANGUAGE POSITION ON HOUSING

This paper is about housing for people with an intellectual disability. This paper outlines what Inclusion Canada thinks and believes about housing for people with an intellectual disability.

## WHAT IS THE ISSUE WITH HOUSING?

Finding a place to live for people with an intellectual disability can be very hard. People are often placed in housing that is away from the rest of society. People are often placed together in the same housing. This type of housing includes the following places:

- Large institutions
- Nursing and seniors' homes
- Special care and personal care homes
- Rehab centers
- Other institutional settings

Many people with an intellectual disability can't afford to get a good place to live. They can't afford suitable housing even when it is available. They have high rates of poverty. And they don't have the supports to live independently.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- People with an intellectual disability want to live independently. They want to make their own decisions. This is especially true when it comes to where they live and who lives with them.
- Families want their children to be safe. They want them to have their needs met. Too often, people with an intellectual disability are 'placed' in a living situation. It may be because it is the only safe place in the community where they can get their needs met. Families do not want to put their loved ones in these places. But they are forced to because there are no other choices.
- An institution can never be a 'home.' It does not matter how big or small it is. Institutions of any size do not allow people to have their basic rights. When people live in institutions, they have no personal control. They are not allowed to make their own decisions or choices. They cannot be independent. They do not have any opportunities. Institutions keep people apart from the rest of society. Institutions force people to live together.
- There is no personal control in many housing models. Group homes do not allow for personal control. They do not allow for choice and decision making. People with an intellectual disability are 'placed' in these models. They do not choose to live there.

- Disability services and supports are not the same across the country. People don't have the same access to the supports they need for independent living in the community. Access to disability supports is not considered a right. These supports are considered to be social assistance. These supports are often hard to get. They are not always available to people.
- There are not many options for individuals and families. The options do not support a lifestyle with choice. It is often assumed that people will stay in the family home forever. Or they will move into group homes or other institutions.
- Planning that is person-centred is hard to get. Independent planning is hard to get. Many people with an intellectual disability can't access these services.

## INFORMATION THAT WE KNOW TO BE TRUE

- Institutions are not good places to live. They are not in the best interests of people with an intellectual disability.
- People with an intellectual disability do not want the option of living in an institution. They want supported living. They do not want to be offered options in facilities. They want a safe and decent home of their own. They want choice and control in their day to day decisions. They want to have status as tenants or as homeowners. They want to be able to get personal supports from others who care about them and respect them. The same basic housing standards should apply to all Canadians. This includes people with an intellectual disability.
- Housing should be accessible. Housing should allow for full inclusion in the community. People must be directly involved. They must help plan and choose their housing and support services. Funding must move with the person. The funding must be controlled by the person rather than an agency or facility.
- There are different factors that make a housing situation inclusive or not. They depend on several different things. This includes where the person lives, how that place is set up, and the neighbourhood the person lives in.
- Together, the following things make a housing situation inclusive.
  - It takes away any barriers to the activities of daily living. These barriers may be due to physical, mental or health issues.
  - It is a home by choice. It is not grouped housing. The neighbourhood is not based on one factor like disability or income.
  - It allows people to take part in the social life of their community. It allows people to take part in the economic life of their community.
  - People are recognized and valued as full members of the neighbourhood.

- People have all their rights. This includes their rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It also includes their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- People can live an independent life. People are included in the community.

## **INCLUSION CANADA BELIEVES THAT HOUSING MUST CHANGE SO PEOPLE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY CAN HAVE SAFE, AFFORDABLE, INCLUSIVE HOUSING OPTIONS**

Inclusion Canada believes that housing must change so people with an intellectual disability can have safe, affordable, inclusive housing. This can happen by taking the following actions.

- The right to live in the community must be recognized. Public policy must also recognize and support this right. Canada must help people with an intellectual disability to live in the community. Canada must support this right. This will follow the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 19). It will also follow the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Sections 7 and 15).
- The approach to housing must be based on rights. The approach to community inclusion must also be based on rights. People need to have access to housing that meets their needs and that they can afford. There must be individual support chosen by the person. Housing must be separate from other disability related supports.
- Stop putting people in institutions. This includes any kind of institution of any size.
- Close the remaining institutions. Make a federal fund for provinces and territories. This fund will be for helping with the cost of closing institutions.
- Help people move out of institutions. Help people move back to the community. Use any savings from closing institutions to help people. Use the savings for community supports and services. This includes accessible housing that people can afford.
- Make sure housing programs are inclusive. Make sure they follow the principles of community living. This applies to social housing programs at all government levels.
- Make sure people can afford to pay the rent. This includes using rent assistance. Or linking rent to income. Or using other similar programs to make sure people can pay their rent.
- Make sure people have the disability supports they need. This will make sure that people with an intellectual disability can get housing that suits them. Disability supports need to be able to change to new situations. Supports have to be able to respond to an emergency. Supports need to respond to changes in the persons' needs.
- Require all levels of government to have action plans. The plans must make sure that people are not put into institutions again. Governments must make sure that community based services are provided. This includes having enough housing stock.

- Invest funds into making more housing stock. Housing stock must meet the needs of people with an intellectual disability. This must be for housing needs right now and into the future.
- Increase the approach to housing development. Include the five areas of inclusive housing. These five areas of inclusive housing are household, dwelling, structure, person, and neighbourhood.
- This will address the social setting that people live in. It will also address the larger environment that people live in.