

Safe, Affordable Housing: Recommendations to Address the Housing Crisis for Albertans with Developmental Disabilities



Executive Summary

September 2025

Canada's housing crisis is acutely impacting Albertans with developmental disabilities due to their greater vulnerability to rising costs and the insufficient availability of safe, accessible housing.

Organizations providing housing services to individuals are also hampered by disjointed policies, limitations in housing models, inadequate collaboration opportunities, and funding constraints.

47%

of organizations' housing services are **at risk due to increasing costs** ¹



84%

of organizations have challenges supporting individuals to **age in place**



66%

of organizations have challenges **accessing existing accessible housing**



76%

of organizations have challenges **building or renovating for accessibility**



1. ACDS, January 2024. *Sector Scanner 2023*.

In this document:

- **Summary of key challenges** in **policy**, **coordination and partnerships**, **housing approaches**, and **funding**
- **Framework of guiding principles** for developing community-based housing solutions
- **A series of 13 evidence-based recommendations for immediate and longer-term actions**, including:
 - **Recognizing housing as a core support within the range of PDD-funded services**, and identifying other opportunities to implement or expand policies or strategies to include a disability lens
 - **Creating structured mechanisms to support collaborations** to address affordable housing supply
 - **Aligning housing approaches to fit the diverse and changing needs of individuals**, including supports for aging in place
 - **Increasing funding or financing options** for individuals to access housing suited to their unique needs, and for housing providers or landlords to create and maintain safe, affordable housing

This project was informed by stakeholder engagement and research completed by KPMG for ACDS. In addition, ACDS surveyed member agencies, consulted the Disability Action Hall, and reviewed historical documents produced by the Disability Action Hall, the Self Advocacy Federation, and other self-advocates in Alberta. Findings were validated and recommendations were developed in collaboration with the ACDS Housing Task Team, comprised of 11 ACDS member agency leaders with extensive experience across the housing continuum in the Community Disability Services sector.

Access the full report and plain-language document at acds.ca/resources/latest-research-and-reports

Overarching Challenges

Policy

The provincial system for housing supports is not integrated with the system for disability supports. Policy such as licensing requirements do not reflect the realities and needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. Some service providers of individuals with more complex needs are becoming housing providers to ensure the housing needs of the individuals they serve are met.

Coordination and partnerships

There are no structures in place to support service providers taking on the role of housing provider in coordination with others in the sector, such as government or developers.

Housing approaches

Just as there are varying types of developmental disabilities, there is a wide array of housing needs across the sector. For individuals with low support needs, standard affordable housing options can be sufficient. Individuals with more complex needs may require more tailored or purpose-built housing to meet their needs and support service delivery. An individual's needs will also change across their lifespan; individuals with developmental disabilities often have unique needs around aging in place.

Funding

Individuals with disabilities are often unable to afford the market cost of rent. Service providers are generally not funded to provide housing or to cover the maintenance costs of the housing stock they own. Service providers could also benefit from access to financing options to purchase their own housing stock.

Current vs. Desired Future State

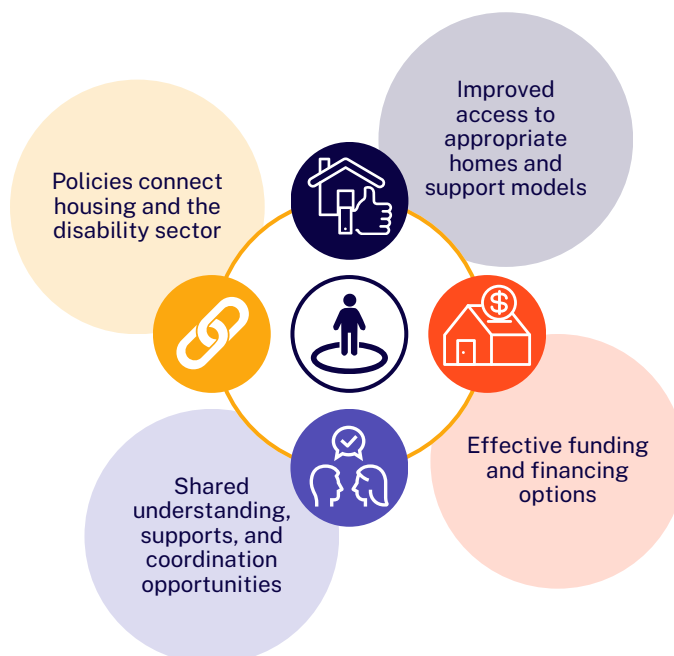
Current State

Individuals with disabilities need access to more stable, affordable, and accessible housing options and models that are supported by a coordinated approach from providers and government.



Future State Vision

Community based housing policies and approaches recognize housing as an integral component of supports for individuals with disabilities. Support models prioritize housing, individuals have access to affordable and appropriate homes, and there is increased coordination across the sector.



Guiding Principles

The following principles were established as a general framework for developing solutions and ideas regarding housing for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Individuals with developmental disabilities have unique housing and support needs.

Addressing housing and support needs together allows individuals to optimize their independence and quality of life.



All individuals, regardless of ability, have a right to appropriate options for quality community living.

Personal choice

Individuals with developmental disabilities have a range of housing options that respect their personal preferences and dignity. Individuals have meaningful and realistic options for individual autonomy and enhanced quality of life.

Affordability

Affordable housing options are available to individuals with developmental disabilities, ensuring they can access stable, long-term homes without financial strain.

Accessibility

Housing is designed with universal accessibility in mind, ensuring that individuals with developmental disabilities can live independently and comfortably in homes that accommodate their unique needs. Accessibility includes a range of personalized accommodations and safeguards that support a spectrum of needs, and is updated to reflect increases or changes in their needs over time.

Safety

Individuals with developmental disabilities live in well-maintained, home-like (not institutional) environments that ensure physical and emotional safety through flexible safety measures tailored to their needs. Additionally, the homes support the safety of their support staff and their community.

Stability

Individuals have access to safe, long-term housing options that are responsive to their changing needs over time, including their need to age in place. There is a shared understanding of the importance of housing continuity across service providers and all levels of government. Housing options are not solely driven by short-term solutions dependent on funding.

Belonging

Individuals with developmental disabilities are welcomed into inclusive communities. By fostering opportunities for social, educational, and economic participation, housing and support services encourage belonging and engagement, where individuals feel valued, respected, and included.

Supports

The diverse and evolving needs of individuals with developmental disabilities are recognized and accommodated. Supports are adaptable and flexible to enable individuals to live as independently as possible. Housing plays a crucial role in ensuring that the right supports can be provided, and that supports can be changed as an individual's level of need changes.

Recommendations

“Don’t just help me find housing, give me the support I need while I am housed.”

- Participant of [Rights to Roofs](#), October 2024. Self Advocacy Federation.

A. Take a unified approach to housing within ALSS

Leverage the new Assisted Living and Social Services (ALSS) Ministry structure to develop a unified housing approach. This would require the Ministry to bring together divisions and supports that were previously spread across multiple portfolios within the government to coordinate across shared issues.

B. Identify housing as a core support within the scope of PDD

Expand Disability Services’ scope of funded services to include housing as a core support for PDD-eligible individuals unable to access appropriate housing on their own. This is particularly critical for individuals with complex medical or support needs. Recognize housing as interrelated with and integral to PDD supports.

C. Identify strategies and resources under Alberta’s affordable housing strategy to support individuals with developmental disabilities

Alberta’s 10-year plan to improve and expand affordable housing identifies people with disabilities as a target population. While some individuals with developmental disabilities also have physical disabilities, many do not and are not clearly included in this target population, though they are also vulnerable to inadequate housing or homelessness. Resources and strategies should be identified to support this population.

D. Develop new community living accommodation standards

This recommendation echoes ACDS’s Recommendations for Effective and Appropriate Facilities Licensing, which calls to:

1. Replace existing continuing care accommodation licensing requirements with a new set of simplified core standards based on dignity, self-determination, and independence that are appropriate for all community living homes (regardless of number of residents), and
2. Establish a threshold for the current accommodation licensing requirements, applicable only where the number of residents far exceeds those typical in personal homes and resembles a facility-based care site.

E. Improve coordination and alignment across the various requirements that apply to service-provider run housing

Build a common understanding across the sector, including federal, provincial, and municipal government and service providers, of the varying codes, standards, and requirements that impact service providers developing, renovating, or maintaining housing. Increase coordination and consistency across these requirements.

F. Implement a disability housing innovation hub

Create a mechanism for collaboration and development that brings together players from across the sector. Service providers could leverage this platform to build partnerships with government, developers, technology companies, etc. and access ideas, support, and resources for innovative housing solutions. An innovation or seed grant funding program could be established to pilot innovative ideas.

G. Facilitate connections and incentivize developers to partner with service providers in the sector and develop accessible housing

Establish mechanisms for connection and financial incentives to foster collaboration between developers and service providers. This enhanced partnership aims to drive the development of dedicated, affordable, purpose-built housing initiatives for individuals with developmental disabilities.



Recommendations

Housing Approaches

Funding

H. Conduct a provincial housing needs assessment for individuals with developmental disabilities

Conduct a comprehensive housing needs assessment to understand unmet needs across the province and forecast future housing requirements to support informed decision making around resource allocation.

I. Align supports for individuals with developmental disabilities to age in place

Bring systems together to provide aging individuals with holistic social and medical supports to age in place through better alignment and integration with Assisted Living Alberta, and through removal of program and policy barriers.

J. Fund housing navigators to support individuals with developmental disabilities in finding homes

Establish and fund dedicated housing navigator roles under ALSS to assist individuals to access housing. These professionals should provide personalized support in navigating housing systems, applying for subsidies, liaising with landlords, and coordinating with service providers. Housing navigators could also identify systemic barriers and advocate for solutions.

K. Seek opportunities within AISH and PDD funding to address gaps in funding needs for housing

Explore and advocate for opportunities within the AISH and PDD programs to better reflect and address the housing-related financial needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. This includes identifying current funding limitations, proposing adjustments or enhancements to existing supports, and ensuring that housing costs are adequately covered.

L. Facilitate access to financing options for service providers to acquire homes

Support service providers to access financing options, making it easier for them to purchase housing stock and tailor it to the needs of the individuals they serve. Access to traditional financing options is very limited for non-profit organizations without dedicated housing funding.

M. Implement funding to support maintenance and accessibility costs associated with housing individuals with developmental disabilities

Service providers often can't raise rents to renovate or upgrade homes to make them fit the needs of people with disabilities living there, meaning their existing housing stock is at risk due to ongoing maintenance costs. Provide funding for landlords and service providers to address the costs of conducting renovations to create tailored housing and for ongoing maintenance costs required to appropriately and safely house individuals with developmental disabilities. This could include providing contract flexibility to service providers to allow for the use of surplus dollars to cover maintenance costs.

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