

Safe, Affordable Housing:

Recommendations to Address the Housing Crisis for Albertans with Developmental Disabilities



Executive Summary - Plain Language

September 2025

Housing prices have gone up a lot in the past few years. It is especially difficult for people with developmental disabilities to find safe, accessible, and affordable homes. Many people with disabilities live on fixed income, like AISH, which has not kept up with housing costs. Some people with disabilities also need specialized housing because regular homes don't meet their support needs.

Service providers and families are trying to fill some gaps, but it is hard and expensive.

We did this project to find out the main problems, and to suggest changes so people with disabilities can have housing that is safe, affordable and right for their needs.

In this paper:

- **We summarize the main types of housing problems.** These have to do with government **policy**, **coordination and partnerships**, **housing approaches**, and **funding**
- **We propose a framework of guiding principles.** These are the most important things to keep in mind when making decisions about community-based housing for people with disabilities
- **We make 13 suggestions (recommendations), based on our research, for actions that can be taken to make housing for people with disabilities much better.** These suggestions include:
 - **Making housing a key part of the help that PDD provides**, and finding other ways in government policies or initiatives to make sure they include the unique needs of people with disabilities
 - **Creating ways to support service providers and housing developers to work together** to create more affordable housing
 - **Having housing approaches that provide the right mix of supports**, including changes in supports over time so people can stay in their homes as they get older
 - **Increasing funding or other ways to access money** for people to get housing that meets their needs, and for housing providers or landlords to create and fix safe, affordable housing

This project was based on research and conversations done by KPMG for ACDS. As well, ACDS surveyed member agencies, talked to the Disability Action Hall, and looked at work done in the past by the Disability Action Hall, the Self Advocacy Federation, and other self-advocates in Alberta. We set up the ACDS Housing Task Team, a group of 11 ACDS member agency leaders with lots of experience in the housing sector, to help us check the findings, share their ideas, and develop the recommendations.

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

47%

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



84%

of organizations have challenges supporting people to **stay in their homes as they get older**



66%

of organizations have challenges **finding accessible housing**



76%

of organizations have challenges **building or renovating to make homes more accessible**



1. ACDS. January 2024. Sector Scanner 2023.

Main Types of Problems

Policy

The system for housing supports in Alberta doesn't work together with the disability supports system. This sometimes causes clashes and confusion. Rules like licensing requirements don't match the real-life needs of people with disabilities. Because of this, some service providers that support people with complex needs are becoming housing providers to make sure these people have a safe place to live.

Coordination and partnerships

There are no systems or supports to help service providers work together with others - like the government or housing developers - when they become housing providers. Service providers are mostly working alone to find solutions.

Housing approaches

One-size-fits-all doesn't work for everyone. People with developmental disabilities have different needs, and that includes their housing. Some people might be fine with regular housing; others may need housing that is specially designed for them. A person's needs can also change as they get older. Housing approaches that can be adjusted as these needs change helps people to stay in their homes as they get older.

Funding

Many people with disabilities can't afford regular rent prices. Service providers that support them usually don't get funding to offer housing or to pay for the upkeep of the homes they own. Loans or other funding options could help these agencies to buy and maintain safe, affordable, and accessible housing for the people they support.

Current vs. Desired Future State What We Have Now vs. How We Want Things To Be

Current State

People with disabilities have a hard time getting housing that is safe, affordable, and accessible. Service providers are trying to fill gaps, but need more funding and support from government to work with other partners.



Future State Vision

Housing supports and disability supports work together without gaps or confusion. Support models make sure plans for housing are included so people have access to homes that fit their needs. There is coordination between government, service providers, and others who develop or provide housing.



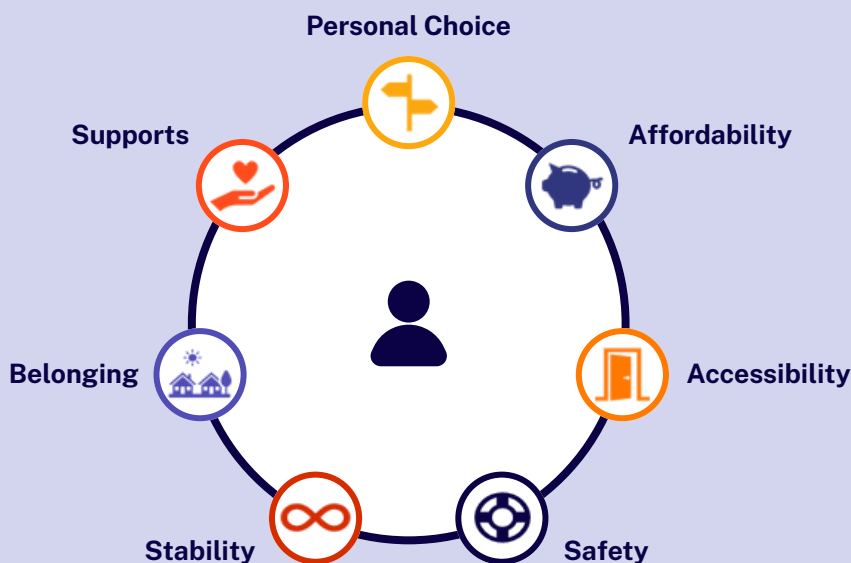
Guiding Principles

The most important things to keep in mind when making decisions about housing for people with disabilities.

People with developmental disabilities have unique housing and support needs. When both are planned together, it helps people live more independently and have a better life.

These ideas come from self-advocates and service providers.

- Some ideas work well together; other ideas might clash, like safety vs affordability.
- The goal is to provide the right balance for each person.



Everyone, no matter their ability, has a right to have good choices for living well in the community.

Personal choice

People with disabilities have meaningful and realistic choices for where they can live. These choices honour what people want and need, and help make life better for them.

Affordability

People with disabilities can find homes they can afford. They can live in a place they like for as long as they want without having to worry about money.

Accessibility

Homes are built so they are easy for people with disabilities to use. They help people live comfortably and fit their needs as they change over time.

Safety

People with disabilities live in safe, clean homes that feel like regular houses – not like not institutions. These homes are made to fit each person's needs. They are safe for the people living in them and for the staff and others who are part of their lives.

Stability

People with disabilities can live in homes that can support them for a long time. Everyone, including service providers and government, understands that it is important to keep housing steady and dependable. Housing choices should not be based just on how much funding is available right now.

Belonging

People with disabilities are welcomed in their communities. Housing and support services help people join in social, learning, and work activities – helping them to build real connections so they are valued, respected and included.

Supports

People with disabilities get supports that adjust as their needs change. The supports that people get help them to live as independently as they can, and they are updated when needed. Housing is a key part to make sure people have the right supports to live well.

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. Work with Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services to make a single, coordinated plan for housing

Use the new Ministry setup to bring together different divisions and partners to work as one group to make one clear plan for housing people with developmental disabilities and get rid of confusion.

B. Make housing a key part of the help that PDD provides

Include housing as part of the supports funded by Disability Services for people who qualify for PDD and can’t find suitable housing on their own, especially people with complex medical or support needs. Housing should be seen as an important part of the safe and effective help that PDD provides.

C. Find ways and resources in Alberta’s affordable housing strategy to help people with developmental disabilities

Alberta’s 10-year affordable housing plan includes people with disabilities, but it is not clear if people with developmental disabilities are part of that group – especially if they don’t have physical disabilities. People with developmental disabilities also face risks like poor housing and homelessness. The plan should include specific supports and resources for them.

D. Make new rules to make sure community housing is safe and meets people’s needs

This idea supports what ACDS recommends for better licensing of community housing:

1. Replacing current rules with simpler, core standards that protect people’s dignity, freedom, and independence – no matter how many people live in the home.
2. Only use the current rules for homes where the number of people living in them are many more than usual, such that these places look more like a care facility than a regular home.

E. Make sure the rules for housing run by service providers work well together and don't clash

Help everyone – city governments, provincial government, federal government, and service providers – understand the different rules that affect service providers when they build, fix, or update homes. Make these rules more consistent and coordinated.

F. Set up a disability housing innovation hub

An innovation hub is a place where different groups work together to share ideas, build partnerships, and test new solutions. In a housing innovation hub, service providers, developers, technology companies and others would work together to create, fund, and test new solutions to the housing problems faced by people with disabilities.

G. Help service providers and developers to work together, and offer incentives for partnerships to build homes for people with disabilities

Create ways in which service providers and developers can come together to share ideas and resources. Have government provide incentives to put these ideas in place. Incentives can be things like funding, tax-breaks, low interest loans, less red tape, or other things like these that make it easier to create houses for people with developmental disabilities. Incentives could help developers and service providers come up with better ideas for housing and build homes more easily.



Recommendations

Housing Approaches

Funding

H. Do a study (needs assessment) to understand what kinds of housing people with disabilities need

A needs assessment would look at what types of housing exists in all the different parts of Alberta, how it matches the needs of people with disabilities, and find out where the gaps are. It would also look at data about the changing needs of people, and try to predict what the future housing needs might look like so that we can plan better for the future.

I. Help people with disabilities have the right mix of supports to stay in their homes as they get older

As people get older, they usually need a mix of supports from different areas of government. This solution would aim to help these different areas to work more closely with each other and with Assisted Living Alberta so that their rules and requirements make it easier for people to get the supports they need to stay in their homes as they get older.

J. Have government fund "housing navigators" - a new position to help people with disabilities find a place to live

Agencies do not have funding to help people with disabilities find housing. Housing navigators would be a new role, funded by the government, to give one-on-one support to agencies and people with disabilities to apply for housing, find subsidies, talk to landlords, and work with other services. They would also look for problems in the system and speak up for changes to meet people's needs.

K. Look at ways to use AISH and PDD funding to help cover housing costs where these are needed

Look at current gaps in funding and supports. This includes finding where funding is too low, suggesting improvements or changes to AISH and PDD, and finding ways to make sure housing costs are covered.

L. Make it easier for service providers to get funding or loans to buy homes

Many service providers are nonprofit agencies. Nonprofit organizations often have a hard time getting regular loans from the bank because they don't have special funding for housing. This recommendation is about helping service providers get the funding or loans they need to buy homes and adapt them for the needs of people with disabilities.

M. Provide funding to help cover costs to maintain housing and make it accessible for people with disabilities

Service providers usually can't raise rents to renovate or upgrade homes to make them fit the needs of people with disabilities living there. This recommendation is about helping landlords and service providers get funding to make these improvements, so housing is safe and suitable for people living there. It could also include giving service providers more flexibility in using any leftover money they already have in their contracts to pay for these improvements.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

Andrea Hesse | CEO
Andrea@ACDS.ca | 587-330-1445

Nilima Sonpal-Valias | Project Lead
Director, Strategic Initiatives and Engagement
Nilima@ACDS.ca | 587-330-1462

ACDS HEAD OFFICE

Suite 220 200 Rivercrest Drive SE
Calgary, AB T2C 2X5

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