



DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

HOUSING INITIATIVE

Council on Housing and Homelessness – May 2025

About DDHI



Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative (DDHI) is a Vermont parent-run advocacy group with over 125 families.

We support the development of stable, service-supported Peer Residences for our adult children, who have an Intellectual/Developmental Disability diagnosis (I/DD), qualify for Medicaid Home and Community-based Services (HCBS) waiver and have significant support needs.

Our Families

- Average age of parents is 66
- Average age of our adult sons and daughters is 28
- Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of our families need 1:1 24/7 support
- Our adult children with I/DD have complex specialized needs (such as communication, behavioral, mental health, medical, and more), with an average of 3.8 specialized needs per individual.

BROKEN PROMISES

When the Brandon Training School closed 30 years ago, Governor Dean said:

“I’m proud to maintain the commitment of the state to the very kind of services that we still owe to the population that was once at Brandon and is now in the community. We will continue to assure the individuals receive support and services; we will continue to assure that those services meet acceptable levels of quality; we will continue to assure that persons receiving the services are free from abuse and neglect or mistreatment; to assure that the folks taking care of the people needing these services have adequate training and support. So, our commitment does not end with the closing of this institution.”

This promise has not been kept.

THE NEED



Today, individuals in Vermont with I/DD do not have a choice in housing options. The only option the state offers is adult foster care, which is not a stable living situation. When a paid foster care provider is no longer able to provide shelter and care, the vulnerable adult is without a home. This is an unstable living situation for vulnerable adults, some of whom require 24/7 care. If there are no providers available, adults with I/DD are potentially homeless.

The Developmental Disabilities Act promotes housing choice and community inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities. Vermont's federal CMS Corrective Action Plan addresses Vermont's efforts to comply with HCBS settings regulations, which impact how Medicaid-funded services are delivered in community settings. Part of Vermont's Corrective Action Plan is to explore housing alternatives for people with disabilities to provide more choices and options within their HCBS supports.

Vermont is behind other states who offer housing choices.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES AND GAPS



LACK OF FUNDING

- Lack of funding of the services and housing needed to access the choice of housing and the involvement in community as described in the federal CMS settings rules
- No pipeline of funding available
- Some housing models can't take advantage of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits
- Need for coordination of private funding sources with state/federal funds
- Funding needed for start up technology investment
- Lack of Operational Funding parity for agency managed housing models vs. non-agency managed housing models

BIGGEST CHALLENGES AND GAPS



LACK OF DATA

- There is no statewide data to quantify the need for service-supported housing for adults with I/DD broken down by county or designation area.
- There is no statewide data that includes the level of support needs.
- There is currently no means or plan to track the development of new service supported housing serving individuals with I/DD.
- Lack of consistency and transparency around the offerings of quantity and types of support options across the state.
- How will the state measure progress?
Or the lack of it?

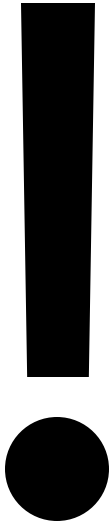
BIGGEST CHALLENGES AND GAPS



LICENSING & PROTECTION

- There is no appropriate licensing for *permanent* service supported Peer Residences, like the new housing models being developed from Act 186.
- DDHI desires oversight and protection along with the recognition that our children will be living in homelike settings, not nursing homes or institutions. Licensing regulations should reflect this.
- Licensing and oversight of current residential (nursing and temporary) settings do not align with the current federal CMS Settings Rule.
- The cost of licensing and the associated complicated application is prohibitive.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES AND GAPS



STAFFING CRISIS

There is an ongoing Staffing Crisis for Direct Support Professionals that will be needed to staff these homes.

A survey of our DDHI families in December 2024 revealed the following concerning statistics:

- 18% of the families are receiving ZERO of their budgeted support hours.
- Clients with less than 24/7 supports currently receive only 53% of their eligible direct support service hours.
- At least 26% of the responding families have had to leave jobs or reduce the number of hours they are working to provide the necessary care and oversight for their adult children due to the staffing shortages.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES AND GAPS



OTHER CHALLENGES

- Lack of coordination between state Housing and Services agencies to coordinate a state plan for the needed 602 units of service supported housing options for adults with I/DD.
- No access to coordinated entry.
- Lack of Section 8 Housing Vouchers for adults with I/DD.

✓ Involvement of adults with I/DD and their families with lived experience to help develop innovative solutions.

✓ The Act 186 grants provided state funding for the planning of several housing models. The three grant implementation plans include recommendations for replicating, and for removing barriers to create similar housing.

✓ Strong family advocacy, awareness raising, and relationship building with State and Federal Legislators, State Agencies, Housing Trusts, developers, affordable housing architects, and more.

SUCCESSSES



RECOMMENDATIONS:

To develop a comprehensive and coordinated plan for service-supported peer housing for adults with I/DD, we must integrate funding strategies, improve state partnerships and support services, implement staffing solutions, create sustainable infrastructure, and adjust policy, licensing and regulations for a solution that fosters independence, community, and dignity.

Some specific recommendations include:

- ☐ Move new models towards funding and policy parity so that agency and non-agency owned/managed models are funded at the same rate when providing equivalent support services to ensure sustainability.
- ☐ Ensure all regulations and licensing comply with federal CMS settings rules.
- ☐ Provide funding for Technology to support staffing.
- ☐ Create a method for people with I/DD and high support needs to be eligible for Coordinated Entry.



RECOMMENDATIONS (cont'd):

- ❑ Require DAIL to collect and make available the number of individuals with I/DD in each county of Vermont.
 - ❑ Change contracts with DAs and SSAs to require them to provide choices in service-supported peer housing.
 - ❑ Provide guidance to DAs and SSAs on how to implement and offer service-supported housing choices.
 - ❑ Change the SOCP 2-person rule to allow more than 4 adults to live in a dwelling unit in a residential setting.
- ❑ Make changes to licensing:
 - ❑ To support permanent service supported peer residences.
 - ❑ Provide clear specific guidance and support systems for completing applications.
 - ❑ Consider a new, appropriate level of licensing for permanent service supported homes for adults with I/DD.
 - ❑ Create long term funding streams for housing, see ideas from other states.

Ideas for Long Term Funding Streams for Housing from Across the US

- The FL Housing Finance Corporation opened a dedicated application stream for housing for individuals with I/DD.
<https://www.autismhousingnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/APITW-Report-2021-04.13.21.pdf>
- Governor's office and New Jersey Housing Mortgage Finance Agency created Special Needs Housing Trust Fund. Municipalities are constitutionally obligated to establish a realistic opportunity for the provision of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households.
<https://bergenunitedway.org/affordable-homes/housing-for-individuals-with-developmental-disabilities/>
- Ohio Community Capital Assistance Program administers funds made available by the state used to develop community housing for people with I/DD.
<https://dodd.ohio.gov/about-us/our-programs/community-capital-assistance-program>
- Develop a Supportive Housing Tax Credit program
- MA - CIL Realty of Massachusetts Inc. uses MassDevelopment bonds to acquire land, construct, renovate, furnish and equip licensed group homes for individuals with I/DD. Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC) manages for Dept of Housing and Community Development, several state loan programs that use general obligation bonds to provide permanent financing for affordable supportive housing.
<https://cedac.org/housing/supportive-housing/>
- A Public Private Partnership FUND for statewide use, possibly through the VT Community Foundation.



THANK YOU!

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Additional materials are available upon request, including:
DDHI Family Stories, About DDHI, Supports Services Survey, Needs Assessment, and Models Report.