

New Brunswick Association for Community Living

Position Statement On: Having a Home and Access to Housing

Purpose

To ensure that people with an intellectual disability have the right to choose where and with whom they want to live with the support that they may require in a home that is suitable, adequate, accessible and affordable.

Background

For many of us, the foundation for a “good life” is the home in which we live. Home provides us with a sense of belonging and security, connection to a larger community, and the opportunity to decide for ourselves how and with whom we want to live.

For people with an intellectual disability, and others who may require support in their lives, the concept of home can look quite different. For many adults, home means living with their parents well into their thirties, forties or fifties. For many others, home is the place you have to go to live in order to receive the support you need. For many, this used to be large institutions. Thirty years ago, people were offered opportunities to live in “homelike” settings that we defined as “community based services.” These are usually smaller facilities in which people still live in groups and in which their associations “and the daily pattern of their lives are dictated by where they live.”¹ Because people are grouped either on the basis of their disability label or their perceived assistance needs, many people with an intellectual disability have little or no control over the most basic decisions regarding where they live, with whom they live, and how they spend their time.

Opportunities for people to live in their own home are directly linked to wellness and well-being. Having a decent and affordable home is generally recognized as a key determinant of health. Increasingly, people with an intellectual disability (with the support of their families) are looking to develop opportunities to live in their own home in the community.

Over the past 20 years, there have been significant developments in the area of supported living for people with intellectual and other disabilities. “Supported living” is a phrase that means people live in their own homes (which they choose) and receive the personal and other supports that are needed to enable them to carry out the regular activities of life in their home and community. In essence,

¹ Jay Klein, et al, *The Journey Home: A New Approach to Housing and Assistance*, 1998, p.2.

supported living is about people having choice, a decent and secure home, personalized supports, and opportunities to develop relationships and participate in the broader community in which they live.

For people with physical disabilities, this has been spurred by the growth in Independent Living Centres across Canada, including New Brunswick. Supported living for people who have an intellectual disability has developed through small scale efforts to develop alternatives for people outside of the traditional residential services system.

One of the important lessons learned from other jurisdictions and New Brunswick's limited involvement in supported living has centred on the importance of individuals and organizations in the community to facilitate supported living. Evidence clearly suggests that this is most crucial for people who have an intellectual disability who may lack the skills necessary to self manage their supports and personal living arrangements

Principles

- People have the right to choose where and with whom they live.
- “Home” is a place:
 - Where people exercise control over their daily routines, including who enters to visit and stay;
 - That is private and which matches each person's chosen lifestyle;
 - Where people who share a home live in some kind of chosen and mutual relationship with each other;
 - Where people have a connection to their communities;
 - That provides some type of legally assured tenure.
- People have the right to live in suitable, adequate and accessible housing that they can afford.

Position Statements

It is NBACL's position that:

1. Having a home of one's choosing is central to the right of all people to be included within their communities as full citizens.
2. In the operation of government funded service systems, housing and personal supports should primarily be seen as two distinct needs. The right and opportunity to choose where and with whom to live should not be forfeited due to personal needs for support in your home.

3. Government policies and programs must develop the capacity to provide “supported living” opportunities for people with an intellectual disability throughout New Brunswick. This will require having organizations within each region of the province that can effectively develop, implement and monitor supported living arrangements.
4. Government programs that offer and provide access to affordable housing must afford people with the right to choose where they will live.
5. People who currently live in residential facilities must be provided with opportunities to plan for and receive support in a home of their own should they wish to move.
6. People with an intellectual disability (and their families) must be provided with the support that they require to plan for the smooth transition from living in the family home to living in a home of their own. Priority for this support should be provided to individuals who live with senior parents.
7. Provincial income support programs must afford people with intellectual and other disabilities with enough income to afford suitable, adequate and accessible housing. This should include the opportunity to supplement income support benefits with other sources of income.
8. The exemption from paying the provincial portion of residential property taxes should apply to situations where people with disabilities live in a home that is provided by a family member, even if the person with a disability does not own the home.