

Integrated transition planning for youth with disabilities creates a path to living a full, meaningful, and connected life as a community member. It means planning for what will change as your child becomes an adult. We know that every child is different, so every idea might not be right for your family. This fact sheet explains housing options for adults with disabilities.



Start the Conversation Early

It's important to talk with your youth about where they want to live as an adult. You can bring it up informally as your child gets closer to finishing high school and it can be part of transition planning with their school team. Talk about where, with whom and what kind of living situation they see themselves in. Talk about the things they might need to work on to be ready. Keep in mind that a youth's skills will continue to grow and develop well beyond the age of 18.

A Family Decision

Moving out of the family home is a personal decision. For some youth, having a place of their own is an important part of becoming an adult. For others, continuing to live at home and finding other ways to build a self-determined life is the right decision. A young adult may not want to make a choice about where they live until they are in their mid-20s or even older.



Learn About Your Choices

Learn as much as you can about housing options for adults with disabilities in your community. If your youth is enrolled in a long-term support program, their IRIS consultant or Family Care team may be a good source of information about housing. They know your community and which agencies support adults with disabilities in your area. Some other ways to learn what's available in your area are:

- Talk with other families.
- [Aging and Disability Resource Centers](#) have information about local housing options.
- [Independent Living Centers](#) are available with information and referral.
- [Children's Resource Centers](#) offer a wide array of transition resources.
- [Wisconsin Public Housing Agency](#) for those with limited income.
- Family-support organizations like [Living Our Vision, Inc.](#) support families to start the process of moving out of a family's home with their [Moving On](#) sessions.
- Disability-specific organizations may know how families in similar situations found success.
- Community living agencies help people live as independently as possible in their communities.
- Department of Human Services in your county may offer resources to families.

Estimating What Your Youth Needs

Be realistic about the support your youth will need when your family is weighing housing choices. To work with a community agency, you'll need to explain their daily care needs, the tasks they can do independently, and needed supports. If they have difficulty managing behaviors or keeping track of appointments, you should document and clearly explain these issues to new caregivers and residential agencies.

Other things that have an impact on housing include: transportation, employment, location of medical providers, day programs, recreation and community activities like grocery shopping or visiting friends.

Tip for Families

Families may assume that youth with complex physical or mental health needs, moving out is unrealistic. But agencies can usually offer full support to individuals with one-on-one care needs if they understand everything that the person will need so they can be prepared.

Continue Working on Life Skills

A youth can take on more responsibility for their health, money management, cooking and grocery shopping. These independence skills will continue to grow and develop for adult children well into their 20s and 30s.

A Little Help from Technology

Technology can be an empowering tool for youth who are gaining independence. For example, remote support systems that allow providers to give real-time assistance to an individual, without needing to be physically present in their home, offer safety and immediate help if needed. Other tools like scheduling apps and augmentative systems for phone calls can be combined to give more independence.



Living Options in the Community

If an adult with a disability chooses to move out of the family home, they have options in their community. First, if the adult is an IRIS or Family Care participant they should talk with their representatives to see which settings are covered by their long-term supports program. Then, the adult and their guardian will generally decide between two living options, community supported living, or regulated (also called residential) settings.

Community Supported Living

Community supported living is an example of an integrated setting, meaning the person with the disability owns or rents the house, apartment, or room and they direct the care and supports. The person and their family or guardian hires any needed direct caregivers for the day and/or night. The person also decides how to spend their day, what to eat, when to go to bed and other ways to control their environment.

A supported living agency offers assistance to people living in their own homes. If the person is not happy with their choice of supported living agency, they can hire a different agency without moving out of their current home or apartment.

Did You Know? Many areas of Wisconsin are creating more options to allow adults with disabilities to live in integrated settings in their communities that provide more control and self-determined living. Adults living in these settings may qualify for public programs like rental assistance, Section 8 or 42 housing, Foodshare, and energy assistance that can make integrated settings affordable for those with limited incomes.

Regulated Settings for Adults with Disabilities

Following are examples of regulated setting options. In a regulated setting an agency or service provider owns or rents the home or apartment and charges a fee for an adult to live there. Room and board fees in these settings are regulated by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. These fees are based on the participant's income, using a formula set by the state of Wisconsin, that leaves the resident with limited spending money. The agency hires its own workers and often sets the schedule and activities for its residents.

- **Adult Family Homes (AFH)** also called licensed group homes, are settings where three- to four-unrelated people live together in a home. Often an organization or non-profit agency owns and manages multiple homes and their quality is monitored by the Department of Health Services, Division of Quality Assurance. See the AFH Consumer Guide listing at dhs.wisconsin.gov/guide/afhdir.pdf.
- **Residential Care Apartment Complexes (RCACs)** can be small or large apartment complexes. In Wisconsin, the average size is 36 units. These are independent apartment units with up to 28 hours of supportive care, personal care, and nursing services per week. For information on finding and choosing RCACs dhs.wisconsin.gov/regulations/rcac/introduction.htm. The RCACs listing dhs.wisconsin.gov/guide/rcacdir.pdf.
- **Community-Based Residential Facilities (CBRFs)** are places where five or more unrelated people live together in a community setting. CBRF services include room and board, supervision, support services, and may include up to three hours of nursing care per week. For information about finding and choosing CBRFs dhs.wisconsin.gov/regulations/cbrf/introduction.htm.



What if My Youth Continues to Live at Home?

Your family and youth may decide that continuing to live at home is the best option based on your cultural beliefs, your family structure, your youth's readiness, or any number of reasons. This can be a short-term or long-term decision. Your youth's adult long-term support program, Family Care or IRIS, can support your family by covering the cost of personal care, respite or other direct care services. This gives parents a break from caregiving and ensures your youth is able to fully access the community.



INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Resources on Housing

Community Housing Taskforce for People with IDD, Interactive housing map: chtfwi.org/housingdirectory

Community Supported Living: wi-bpdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Blueprint.pdf

Independent Living Centers: dhs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/physical/ilcs.htm

Movin' Out Inc: movin-out.org or 877-861-6746 x7

Pacer Center: pacer.org/housing

Pacer Center Tips for Housing and Services: pacer.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-48.pdf

Tenant Resource Center—Tenant Rights, Sample Letters and Agreements:
tenantresourcecenter.org/your_rights

Affordable Housing Directories and Resources on Public Assistance Programs

Administration on Community Living (ACL) Housing and Services Resource Center: acl.gov/HousingAndServices

Affordable Housing Directory: wihousingsearch.org

HUD Directory for Affordable Apartments: hud.gov/states/wisconsin/renting

HUD Frequently Asked Questions on Housing and Public Assistance Programs: hud.gov/faqs

Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP): homeenergyplus.wi.gov



Learn more about transition planning on the Family Voices website
familyvoiceswi.org/resource-library

