Alternative Housing Resource Guide

Elizabeth Moscoso-Anderson
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

In Champaign County and beyond, housing for individuals with disabilities is chosen, designed, owned, and supported by traditional social service agencies that often rely primarily on state and federal funds. The lack of housing options in the community is severely limiting for many families. Thus, the need to expand funding sources and housing for individuals with disabilities is critical.

Aims

This guide was created for Community Choices, a nonprofit organization in Champaign County which serves individuals with disabilities. This guide is meant to assist individuals and their families begin the process of envisioning and developing an affordable, sustainable alternative housing option.

Each housing project looks different based on the desired support, funding and developing an affordable, sustainable alternative housing option.

The concept of the guide was created through regular meetings with the Executive Director of Community Choices. Interview questions, protocols, and consent forms were developed through consultations with the agency and LEND trainee. Four case studies were developed based upon interviews with residents and families who had created alternative housing arrangements. Basic demographic information was collected from a pre-interview questionnaire. In the creation of this guide, we posed several questions across four domains to Champaign families to develop our case studies. Some sample questions included:

Section 1: Beginning the process
As you thought of the future for your child, what did you know about housing supports and options for adults with I/DD?

Section 2: Housing criteria
What type of housing did you consider? Why were those options necessary?

Section 3: Support
How much support was your family member receiving prior to living in the housing arrangement? Describe how you set up and organized the support for the housing set up. How was it funded?

Section 4: Outcomes
How successful do you feel the living arrangement has been? Describe any unexpected challenges or benefits you or your family member experienced.

Background

In Champaign County and beyond, housing for individuals with disabilities is chosen, designed, owned, and supported by traditional social service agencies that often rely primarily on state and federal funds. The lack of housing options in the community is severely limiting for many families. Thus, the need to expand funding sources and housing for individuals with disabilities is critical.

This guide was created for Community Choices, a nonprofit organization in Champaign County which serves individuals with disabilities. This guide is meant to assist individuals and their families begin the process of envisioning and developing an affordable, sustainable alternative housing option.

Each housing project looks different based on the desired support, funding resource, and/or funding available. The guide offers some alternative thinking and critical questions to be considered in the transition to independent living.

The guide utilizes the Community Living Matrix (see below) which succinctly explains housing and support options and may provide more ideas for families in their consideration of housing arrangements and possibilities.

Findings

Of the eight individuals who participated, families shared and advised:

- Having additional supports, whether that be a supportive roommate or other part-time person to help with general support needs, may become crucial for long-term success
- Think in five year chunks and plan for the long-term
- Look for opportunities to connect with other families in similar situations
- Don’t expect the process to be perfect or linear; it may take a few attempts at something to tailor the arrangement to the resident’s needs
- Alternative housing can be made affordable – do not let cost deter you

All families reported successful outcomes, unexpected challenges, and benefits.

Methods

The concept of the guide was created through regular meetings with the Executive Director of Community Choices. Interview questions, protocols, and consent forms were developed through consultations with the agency and LEND trainee. Four case studies were developed based upon interviews with residents and families who had created alternative housing arrangements. Basic demographic information was collected from a pre-interview questionnaire. In the creation of this guide, we posed several questions across four domains to Champaign families to develop our case studies. Some sample questions included:

Section 1: Beginning the process
As you thought of the future for your child, what did you know about housing supports and options for adults with I/DD?

Section 2: Housing criteria
What type of housing did you consider? Why were those options necessary?

Section 3: Support
How much support was your family member receiving prior to living in the housing arrangement? Describe how you set up and organized the support for the housing set up. How was it funded?

Section 4: Outcomes
How successful do you feel the living arrangement has been? Describe any unexpected challenges or benefits you or your family member experienced.

Resources

Center for Independent Futures
We suggest reading the “Alternative Housing Options for Individuals with Disabilities: A Guide for Forming and Implementing Community Partnerships” which may be accessed on the Center for Independent Futures website under free resources.
www.independentfutures.com

PUNS List: Champaign County
To register on the statewide database of the Prioritization of Urgency of Needs of Services (PUNS) List for Champaign County, please contact Champaign County Regional Planning Commission’s Independent Service Coordination Team at (217) 328-3313 and ask for the PUNS Intake Coordinator.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Community Choices members who participated in the development of this guide for future families and co-op members to use in planning for alternative housing arrangements! Your input was invaluable in the creation of this guide.

This work was further supported by the Illinois LEND Program [Grant Number: T73MC11047; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)].