

## **Affordable, community-based housing for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities or autism**

As Independence Day comes upon us let us recall this statement in the United States Declaration of Independence. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, Prader-Willi Syndrome, etc.) and autism want to pursue independent living as they age just like their non-disabled siblings and peers.

About 100,000 adults in North Texas have an intellectual/developmental disability or autism. Their parents are aging and will not be able to care for many of these adults forever. All types of housing options are needed in North Texas to address the needs of these adults. Some of these people will want or need to live away from their parents. They will want to live in the community they know, near people they know, and where they can access health care and assistance in daily living through Medicaid or other programs.

All types of housing are needed in North Texas for this population. Adults with disabilities should be able to live where they want to live and where services are available so they can live up to their potential.

Recently, the Dallas Morning News had two stories about segregated residential developments in North Texas for adults with IDD and Autism (Dozens of parents commit \$1 million to help build autism community in Denton, 6/21/17, Two new DFW housing communities cater to adults with cognitive delays, disorders, 5/24/17). In these developments residents and their families pay as much as \$3,500/month or \$42,000/year in rent. Other services such as health care may add to the monthly cost. These are positive initiatives but in total they are provide housing for less than 500 residents and their costs are prohibitive to many.

North Texas needs more safe, affordable housing for adults with IDD or autism. The U.S. government regards rental costs at or below 30% of one's income to be affordable. Many adults with disabilities

receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as their only source of income. In Texas SSI provides \$735/month. So affordable rent is about \$220/month. The average rent for a studio apartment in Dallas is \$992/month; for a 3 bedroom is \$608/month for each bedroom.

When parents think about retirement and long term living for their child with IDD or autism, they are concerned about the financial costs. The average retiree's retirement savings at the time of retirement is a median \$131,000. Couples retire with a median \$225,000. Their children with IDD or autism may outlive them by 20 to 40 years. Individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are only allowed up to \$2,000 in savings. Most of these adults are not gainfully employed to afford competitive rent. Individuals with IDD or autism, and their parents need affordable housing options to plan for the future.

North Texas needs community-based housing to meet this populations' housing need. Community-based housing is housing many of us already live in, where neighborhood housing (homes, apartments, condos, town homes) are owned and controlled by the individuals who live in or own the housing. Community-based housing supports full access of all individuals to the greater community, including opportunities to seek employment and work in competitive integrated settings, engage in community life, control personal resources, and access to health care in the community. Community-based housing can be less expensive than the segregated residential developments.

Creating safe, affordable housing is a challenge. Depending on the income of an individual, there may be apartments that are affordable. Another option is using HUD-funded Project-Based Vouchers. In recent years the Dallas Housing Authority has offered Project-Based Vouchers to home owners and apartment owners in their area of operation (Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Kaufman, Rockwall and Tarrant Counties). Property owners who are awarded the vouchers rent to people with IDD at about 30% of the residents' income. The remainder of the Fair Market Rent for the property is paid by the Dallas Housing Authority, through HUD funding. The property owner has an agreement with a Medicaid or private provider to manage the care that the residents need. The residents or their families

coordinate the specific services, such as health care or independent living assistance.

Currently, fifty-four people in the DFW area live in homes or apartments that have Project-Based Vouchers, so that their rent only requires about 30% of their income. This is just the beginning of a movement that could help thousands of people with disabilities live independently in safe, affordable housing with the health and independent living assistance they need.

Three families shared the budgets of their of adults with IDD or autism living in the community-based settings, in the chart below. Persons 1 and 2 are living in housing without the Project-Based Voucher. Person 3 is living in housing with a Project-Based Voucher. Persons 1 and 2 receive some help from their families. If they were living in housing with a Project-Based Voucher, they would not need family support.

(W/O PBV)	Person 1	(W/O PBV)	Person 2	(With PBV)	Person 3
Rent	800	Rent	725	Rent	250
Water	35	Water	35	Water	35
Electric	55	Electric	55	Electric	55
Cable/Internet	90	Internet	10	Internet	10
Phone	25	Phone	on family plan	Phone	25
Health Insurance	200	Health Insurance	on family plan	Health Insurance	200
Food	200	Food	250	Food	200
Entertainment	100	Entertainment	100	Entertainment	100
Total Expenses/Mon	1505	Total Expenses/Mon	1175	Total Expenses/Mon	875
Sources of Income		Sources of Income		Sources of Income	
Food Stamps	200	Food Stamps	140	Food Stamps	140
Work	1100	Work	950	Work	0
Parents pay Health Insurance & Phone	225	SSI	240	SSI	735
Total Income/Mon.	1525	Total Income/Mon.	1330	Total Income/Mon.	875

It is difficult to find multi-family and single-family property owners that will apply for Project-Based Vouchers. The dramatic growth in the DFW area drives rent prices up. Most of the new units are aimed at the upper end of the market. (For DFW's low- and middle-income renters, rising rates only part of problem, 8/4/16).

Fair Market Rent is used to calculate the value of the Project-Based Vouchers. FMR is determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). If the FMR is not close to current competitive rent there is no incentive for these property owners to apply for Project-Based Vouchers. The Dallas Housing Authority needs to work with HUD to update the DFW table based on the current rents. More property owners would be willing to apply for Project-Based Vouchers if the FMR were more aligned with the market.

COMMUNITY FOR PERMANENT SUPPORTED HOUSING, a North Texas charity, advocates for affordable housing for adults with IDD or autism with Dallas Housing Authority.

Do you need affordable housing for your child with IDD or autism? Do you want to apply for a Project-Based Voucher for your property? Go to [txcpsh.org](http://txcpsh.org)

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