



INCLUSIVE HOUSING Network Guide

A guide for building inclusive housing networks that foster innovative, person-centered housing solutions for adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.



DSO
Developmental Services Ontario



ABOUT US

Developmental Services Ontario is the central point of access for adults 18+ who have a confirmed developmental disability and wish to apply for services and supports that are funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, (MCCSS). DSO Housing Navigators help people, their caregivers and support networks, as well as the community, learn about individualized housing options, as an alternative to MCCSS-funded supportive housing.

Inclusive housing must reflect diverse lived experiences, recognizing that individuals from racialized, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, newcomer, and other historically marginalized communities encounter additional barriers to securing safe and accessible housing. Our approach prioritizes culturally responsive, community-driven solutions that embrace the full spectrum of identities and needs.

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“The beauty of living independently is the freedom it gives me. No longer do I have to answer to anyone or seek approval for my decisions, whether it’s how I spend my money or when I come and go. It’s empowering to have the autonomy to navigate life on my own schedule while knowing I can always reach out for assistance when needed. In my supportive building, neighbours readily lend a hand, fostering a sense of community that enriches my independence.”

– **Patty O’Donnell, President, People First of New Brunswick**
([Inclusion Canada 15th Annual Federal Policy Forum on Inclusion](#))

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Disclaimer

This guide was created by Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) Housing Navigators as a resource to support individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, service providers, community organizations, developers and policymakers in understanding and collaborating on inclusive housing solutions.

It offers best practices, strategies, and community-driven approaches to housing but is not a policy directive, regulatory document, or formal guideline from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) or the Province of Ontario. While it references relevant policies and frameworks, its purpose is to inform and support decision-making rather than establish formal requirements.

Every effort has been made to ensure the information is accurate and relevant. However, this guide is not exhaustive, and its content may evolve over time. The inclusion of examples, tools, or resources does not imply endorsement or guarantee effectiveness in every situation.

This guide is intended for educational and informational purposes only. Stakeholders should consult relevant professionals, organizations, or governing bodies before making housing-related decisions. DSO assumes no liability for actions taken based on the information provided.



1. Introduction

Access to safe, affordable, and accessible housing should be a fundamental human right. However, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) continue to encounter systemic barriers that limit their ability to secure appropriate living arrangements. Many adults with IDD live with aging caregivers, experience housing insecurity, or reside in settings that do not meet their needs, such as hospitals, long-term care facilities, or group homes. When faced with inadequate housing options, some are left with no choice but to turn to homelessness or rely on homelessness interventions, despite these being unsustainable and undesirable solutions (Reid et al, 2020). These challenges are further intensified by factors such as poverty, discrimination, and inadequate accessibility.

Inclusive housing solutions must be designed with an intersectional approach, acknowledging that identity factors—such as race, ethnicity, gender, cultural background, and socioeconomic status—influence housing access. Individuals from racialized, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, and newcomer communities often face additional obstacles, including discriminatory housing practices and a lack of culturally responsive support services. Addressing these disparities requires policies and strategies that prioritize diverse lived experiences and community-driven solutions.

The Inclusive Housing Network Guide equips stakeholders with practical knowledge and tools to develop inclusive housing models. Rooted in principles of equity, accessibility, and community inclusion, this resource highlights best practices, tools and strategies that foster collaboration between individuals, caregivers, service providers, and policymakers.

Developed by DSO Housing Navigators, this guide serves as a roadmap for building sustainable and inclusive housing solutions. It advocates for choice, self-determination, and dignity, ensuring that individuals with diverse needs have access to safe, affordable homes where they can thrive. It also aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), emphasizing the right to autonomy, full participation in community life, and housing solutions that respect personal and cultural values.

To create truly inclusive communities, housing policies and programs must recognize and address historical and systemic inequities. Engaging people with lived experiences must be done with intention and commitment, ensuring their expertise and experiential knowledge meaningfully shape the housing policies and strategies that impact their lives. By prioritizing their voices, we move beyond one-size-fits-all solutions and work toward a future where inclusive housing is the standard, not the exception.

Together, through collaboration and commitment, we can ensure that all individuals—regardless of ability, background, or identity—have the opportunity to live with dignity, independence, and belonging.

2. Understanding Inclusive Housing

Inclusive housing is essential for advancing equity, accessibility, and community integration for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). It fosters affordability, adaptability, and self-determination while addressing systemic barriers like poverty and discrimination.

By embedding intersectional equity into housing policies, we create solutions that honour diverse identities and needs. Prioritizing independence, personal choice, and dignity not only enhances individual well-being but also strengthens the broader social and economic fabric.

Defining Inclusive Housing

Inclusive housing extends beyond physical accessibility; it encompasses affordability, adaptability, and a commitment to meeting diverse needs at every stage of life. This approach ensures that housing and support services are aligned with personal preferences, granting individuals with IDD the autonomy to make meaningful decisions about their living arrangements. Guided by principles of self-determination and community inclusion, inclusive housing upholds the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which affirms the right to independent living and full societal participation.

Empowering self-determination has been shown to improve personal outcomes and overall well-being (Wehmeyer, 2020). Community integration is equally vital, as housing policies should facilitate participation in local activities, foster connections with neighbours, and ensure access to shared public spaces. Addressing long-standing barriers such as poverty, discrimination, and limited accessibility is essential in expanding housing opportunities for individuals with disabilities.



Addressing Cultural & Intersectional Barriers in Inclusive Housing

Inclusive housing must incorporate an intersectional approach, acknowledging that factors such as race, gender, economic status, disability, and cultural background influence access to stable and affordable housing. Individuals with IDD from marginalized communities—particularly racialized groups, Indigenous populations, newcomers, and LGBTQ+ individuals—often encounter compounded barriers that a universal, one-size-fits-all solution cannot effectively address.

Indigenous persons with disabilities frequently struggle to find housing that respects cultural traditions and supports community-centered living (AMHA, 2023). Additionally, rural and remote areas face significant housing shortages, increasing social isolation and limited access to essential services. Addressing these challenges requires Indigenous-led housing initiatives that align with cultural values, increased funding for on-reserve accessible housing projects incorporating traditional knowledge and strengthened partnerships between Indigenous organizations and housing providers (Puszka et al., 2022).

Similarly, racialized and newcomer communities experience disproportionately

high rates of housing discrimination (CPV, 2022), while language barriers and a lack of culturally responsive services further hinder access to inclusive housing. Community-led solutions, alongside implementing anti-racism and anti-discrimination policies can drive more equitable housing opportunities.

LGBTQ+ individuals with IDD face heightened risks of housing insecurity and discrimination, particularly in group living situations that may not be affirming (Community Housing Canada, 2021). A lack of LGBTQ+ inclusive support services often contributes to social isolation and mental health challenges. To address these issues, housing policies must explicitly protect LGBTQ+ individuals with disabilities from discrimination, promote the development of queer-affirming supportive housing with gender-neutral accommodations, and ensure that housing providers receive cultural competency training to foster inclusive environments (Concannon, 2022).

Integrating intersectional equity into housing policies and practices strengthens the foundation of inclusive housing, allowing it to better meet the diverse needs of all individuals.



Benefits of Inclusive Housing

The advantages of inclusive housing extend beyond individuals with IDD to the wider community. By fostering independence, it enhances quality of life and improves access to critical services, including education, employment, and healthcare. Research has demonstrated that individuals with IDD thrive in inclusive settings that respect their rights and promote autonomy (Grogan et al., 2019).

From a broader perspective, inclusive housing strengthens communities by encouraging diversity, social support, and meaningful integration. It also alleviates financial pressures on public services by reducing the demand for institutional care, emergency healthcare, and homelessness interventions.

Furthermore, it enables individuals with IDD and their families to engage in the workforce, fostering economic stability and productivity (Inclusion Canada, 2021).

Local economies benefit from inclusive housing initiatives as well. These communities generate employment opportunities in areas such as property management, caregiving, and inclusive workforce development.

By emphasizing shared services, such as job coaching, life skills training, and therapeutic support, inclusive housing models not only enhance cost efficiency but also promote economic sustainability.

Ultimately, inclusive housing serves as a foundation for both social progress and long-term economic resilience.



Creating Inclusive Communities

A key aspect of inclusive housing is fostering a sense of community. When environments encourage neighborhood participation, provide accessible public spaces, and support meaningful interactions among diverse populations, they help establish a strong sense of belonging. Additionally, effective support systems—such as employment services, life skills training, and healthcare access—are essential in empowering individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

To create truly inclusive communities, it is crucial to address systemic barriers and implement targeted strategies. The following considerations could play a key role in achieving this goal:

- **Data & Research:** Collect disaggregated housing data to track disparities and inform policy improvements.
- **Cultural Competency Training:** Implement mandatory training for housing providers on disability justice, anti-racism, and gender inclusivity.
- **Community Partnerships:** Co-develop housing solutions with organizations that serve racialized, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ communities.

Historically, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have faced systemic barriers that limited their access to safe, affordable housing.

Discriminatory practices, limited housing options, and policies that favoured institutionalization have forcibly excluded people from the community. Inclusive housing seeks to dismantle these barriers by ensuring that housing is not merely a place to live but a foundation for active participation in society (Grogan et al., 2019).

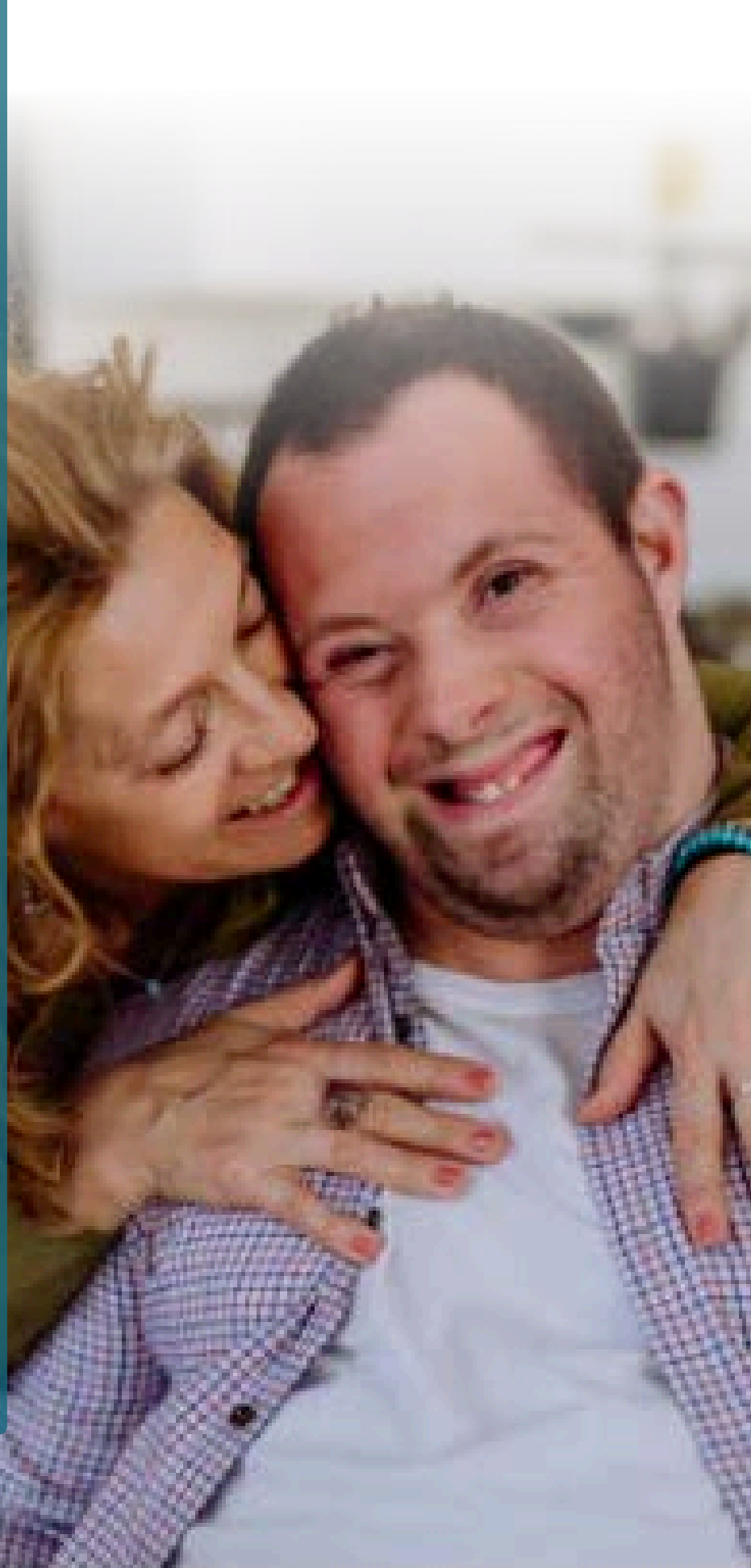


A Vision for the Future

Inclusive housing represents a shared commitment to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of ability, have access to safe, adaptable, and affordable living environments.

By prioritizing policies and practices that support independence, social inclusion, and community integration, society can create a future where inclusive housing is the norm rather than the exception.

Through collaboration among policymakers, service providers, and community members, this vision can become a reality, fostering communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



3. Key Stakeholders in an Inclusive Housing Network

Developing and maintaining inclusive housing requires coordinated efforts from a range of stakeholders. Each group plays a crucial role in shaping policies, creating housing solutions, and providing the necessary support to ensure that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have access to safe, affordable, and accessible homes.

Strong collaboration between these stakeholders is vital for fostering sustainable housing solutions that prioritize independence, community engagement, and dignity.



People with Lived Experiences

The input of people with IDD and their families is essential in shaping inclusive housing initiatives. Their direct involvement in decision-making ensures that housing models align with actual needs, improving both quality of life and overall satisfaction.

Research demonstrates that when individuals with disabilities contribute to housing design and policy discussions, solutions are more effectively tailored to their needs, leading to higher levels of well-being (Lakhani et al., 2019).



Housing Developers & Providers

Housing providers—including private developers, non-profit organizations, and public agencies—are key players in implementing inclusive housing models. Policies such as inclusionary zoning and accessibility requirements help create integrated communities where individuals with disabilities can live alongside their peers.

Evidence suggests that regions with clear guidelines on accessibility and affordability experience greater success in fostering inclusive housing developments (Lindsay et al., 2024).

Collaborating with developers experienced in mixed-income housing, co-housing models, and community-centered planning enhances inclusive housing efforts.



Community Service Organizations

Supportive services are fundamental to successful inclusive housing. These organizations provide essential supports and resources such as support with activities of daily living, life skills training, employment assistance, mental health support, and social engagement opportunities. Integrated housing and service models improve resident stability, employment outcomes, and community engagement (Boland & Guerin, 2023).

Strong partnerships between housing providers and service organizations ensure necessary support structures remain in place. Cross-sector collaborations, including those between nonprofits, government agencies, and private organizations, can further strengthen the long-term impact of inclusive housing models (Gamey & Terashima, 2023).



Government Agencies & Policy Makers

At all levels, government agencies play a significant role in advancing inclusive housing by establishing policies, providing funding, and enforcing accessibility standards. Measures such as tax incentives, rental subsidies, and zoning regulations promote inclusive housing.

For example, policies such as inclusionary zoning and accessibility grants can be instrumental in expanding housing options for people with disabilities. Engagement with policymakers through advocacy efforts ensures that inclusive housing remains a legislative and urban planning priority (Lindsay et al, 2024).

Advocacy Organizations & Community Allies

Disability rights groups, advocacy organizations, and community allies such as family advocacy groups are essential in raising awareness, shaping policy, and challenging discriminatory housing practices.

These grassroots movements and advocacy-driven initiatives have been key in pushing for legislative reforms and developing community-based housing solutions that tackle the complex, intersectional barriers people with disabilities often face.

As highlighted in recent research, advocacy plays a critical role in removing obstacles and promoting innovations in housing design that improve accessibility and inclusion for individuals with disabilities (Lindsay et al., 2024).





Building Strong Partnerships

Collaboration among stakeholders is critical to advancing inclusive housing initiatives. Effective strategies for building these strong partnerships include:

- Engaging with Local Housing Authorities – Partnerships between service managers responsible for housing and developmental service providers can lead to creative housing solutions and supports.
- Working with Municipal Governments – Securing zoning approvals, land grants, and tax incentives facilitates inclusive housing development.
- Encouraging Developer and Non-Profit Partnerships – Mixed-income, cooperative, and shared housing models enhance long-term sustainability.
- Leveraging Funding Through Multiple Channels – Exploring government grants, philanthropic donations, and public-private partnerships ensures financial viability.

Conclusion

An inclusive housing network thrives when all stakeholders work collaboratively, leveraging their expertise and resources to create sustainable, community-integrated living environments. By ensuring the active leadership of individuals with lived experience, engaging developers and service providers, and advocating for supportive policies, we can establish a future where inclusive housing is the standard, not the exception. Through shared commitment and strategic collaboration, we can build housing solutions that honor dignity, choice, and independence for all (Lakhani et al., 2020).



4. Core Components of Inclusive Housing

Inclusive housing is about more than just having a roof over one's head—it is about fostering environments where people can truly flourish. It ensures that individuals feel safe, connected, and supported in their communities, empowering them to lead fulfilling lives.

Living in an inclusive neighbourhood means being part of a space that is easy to navigate, provides social opportunities, and fosters a strong sense of belonging, regardless of ability. A home shapes daily experiences, influencing how individuals engage with family, friends, and the wider community. To build truly inclusive communities, barriers—whether physical, social, or financial—must be removed to allow full participation in everyday life.

Building on the principles outlined in **Section 2**, this section delves into the specific strategies and structural components essential for effective implementation.

Choice & Inclusion

Empowering individuals with control over their living arrangements is key to their well-being. Inclusive housing ensures that residents have the same rights and responsibilities as their neighbours. This includes choosing roommates, having a personal key, deciding on visitors, and even keeping pets, where permitted. The ability to make these decisions fosters a true sense of home and personal empowerment.

Accessibility

An inclusive home must be accessible, not only in design but also in its connection to the broader community. This includes features such as wheelchair-friendly entrances, assistive technology, and sensory-friendly spaces. Additionally, it should be located near essential services like public transportation, grocery stores, and healthcare providers. Affordable rent and financial support options further ensure that individuals can sustain independent living. Accessible housing enhances safety, self-sufficiency, and personal development opportunities.





Integration, Not Isolation

As emphasized in **Section 2**, true inclusion requires mixed housing arrangements where individuals with and without disabilities live together. Large, segregated housing complexes can foster isolation, whereas diverse communities encourage organic social connections.

For instance, Ontario's L'Arche communities successfully integrate individuals with disabilities into shared living spaces with non-disabled peers, promoting natural inclusion.

Diversity & Belonging

Communities thrive when they welcome people of varied backgrounds, abilities, and experiences. Inclusive housing should be designed to serve a broad spectrum of individuals rather than a single group. Mixed communities enrich social experiences, provide opportunities for cultural exchange, and strengthen social networks. Additionally, embracing diversity contributes to stronger economic (Momani & Stirk, 2017) and social structures, reinforcing the benefits of inclusive living.

Affordability

Ensuring long-term stability requires integrating multiple funding strategies, as outlined in **Section 5**. These strategies include rental subsidies, cooperative housing initiatives, and government-supported programs. Without financial security, individuals with disabilities risk housing instability, limiting their ability to participate fully in their communities. Inclusive housing developments must support diverse income levels to promote economic sustainability and social cohesion.




Long-Term Stability

A home should be a place of security, fostering long-term relationships and community ties. Inclusive housing must be designed to adapt to evolving needs, ensuring that residents are not forced to relocate due to changing circumstances. By blending personal networks and community resources, individuals can maintain stability without over-reliance on government or institutional support. Establishing deep-rooted connections with neighbours, local businesses, and communal spaces reinforces a lasting sense of home.

Conclusion

By prioritizing affordability, accessibility, independence, and integrated support systems, inclusive housing fosters environments where individuals with IDD can thrive. These core components transform housing into a foundation for dignity, inclusion, and active community participation.



5. Building an Inclusive Housing Network: A Collaborative Approach

Creating an inclusive housing network is a foundational step toward ensuring that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have access to safe, affordable, and community-integrated housing. Building on the principles, stakeholders, and core components outlined in previous sections, this chapter provides a strategic roadmap for implementation. By fostering collaboration, securing sustainable funding, and advocating for policy reforms, communities can develop inclusive housing solutions that promote dignity, independence, and choice.

To support communities in building an inclusive housing network, the following key steps provide a structured approach to implementation.

1. Defining a Clear Vision & Assessing Needs

The first step in developing an inclusive housing network begins with establishing a shared vision. This requires direct engagement with individuals with lived experience, their families, and advocacy groups to ensure that housing models align with real-world needs. Where possible, people with lived experience must be engaged in policy co-design, using their expertise and experiential knowledge to inform the housing policies that impact their lives.

Conducting community assessments, identifying service gaps, and analyzing successful inclusive housing initiatives elsewhere can help inform a strong foundation

2. Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration

As detailed in **Section 3**, effective collaboration among diverse stakeholders is essential. This includes individuals with lived experience, housing developers, service providers, policymakers, and financial institutions.

By leveraging the strengths of each sector, communities can create a housing ecosystem that is both responsive and sustainable. This section focuses on practical strategies to enhance collaboration, such as developing formal partnership agreements, coordinating service delivery, and establishing advisory boards with representation from key stakeholder groups.



3. Establish Sustainable Funding & Financial Models

Achieving long-term financial sustainability is crucial for the success of inclusive housing initiatives. A well-rounded funding strategy should include:

- Government Grants and Subsidies – Federal, provincial, and local funding programs that enhance accessibility and affordability.
- Philanthropic Contributions – Support from nonprofit organizations and foundations to seed housing projects.
- Social Finance and Community Investment Funds – Specialized financial instruments that encourage long-term sustainability and community ownership.

For a detailed breakdown of available funding sources, refer to **Section 6: Tools and Resources**.

4. Implementing Policy and Legislative Frameworks

Policy advocacy is a key driver of inclusive housing initiatives. Effective policies could incorporate:

- Inclusionary Zoning – Could encourage developers to allocate a percentage of housing units for individuals with disabilities
- Rental Assistance Programs – Expanding subsidies for tenants with IDD improves affordability and stability
- Tax Incentives & Regulatory Streamlining – Investment through tax credits and simplified permitting processes may encourage private-sector partnerships

To drive policy change, stakeholders should collaborate on legislative proposals, engage policymakers, and educate communities about the long-term benefits of inclusive housing.

5. Implement & Scale the Housing Network

To transition from planning to execution, communities must:

- Pilot small-scale projects to test models and refine strategies before full-scale implementation.
- Develop robust governance structures that ensure long-term maintenance and support services.
- Establish evaluation frameworks to measure progress and adapt policies based on real-world outcomes.

By following these foundational steps, communities can build an inclusive housing network that fosters dignity, independence, and long-term success for individuals with IDD.

Conclusion: A Path Towards Inclusive Communities

Developing an inclusive housing network requires a multi-stakeholder approach that emphasizes accessibility, affordability, and long-term sustainability. By fostering collaboration, securing diverse funding sources, advocating for supportive policies, and implementing robust governance structures, communities can build housing solutions that empower individuals with IDD (Lakhani et al, 2019).

With dedicated effort, inclusive housing can become the standard, ensuring that all individuals have the opportunity to live with dignity, independence, and community connection.



6. Tools & Resources

Creating inclusive housing requires strategic planning, collaboration, and sustainable funding. This section provides tools, resources, and actionable strategies to help stakeholders assess needs, engage with key partners, secure financial support, and implement effective policies.

These resources align with the roadmap for implementation outlined in **Section 5**, ensuring that housing solutions are accessible, affordable, and community integrated.

To access these tools & resources, please visit the electronic copy of this guide.



A. Defining a Clear Vision & Assessing Needs

Educational Material:

Understanding legal protections and best practices is essential for inclusive housing development:

- [The Ontario Human Rights Code](#) – Protects individuals from discrimination in housing.
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\)](#) – Recognizes the right of individuals with disabilities to live independently
- [Accessible Canada Act \(ACA\)](#) – Promotes universal design and ensures accountability in accessibility efforts.
- [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms \(Section 15\)](#) – Protects against discrimination based on disability.
- [Ontario Association of Developmental Disabilities](#) – Facilitates research dissemination and knowledge exchange in developmental disabilities.

Needs Assessment & Planning Tools:

These resources assist communities in identifying housing needs and designing inclusive solutions:

- **Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART)** – Helps municipalities evaluate housing stock strengths and address disparities.
- **National Standard Accessible Dwellings (CSA B652:23)** – Establishes guidelines for inclusive housing design.
- **SHEDD Housing Design Tool** – Supports housing development for individuals with developmental disabilities.
- **CMHC Universal Design Guide** – Offers practical guidance for accessible housing design.
- **Unlocking the AODA** – A guide for Ontario housing providers on accessibility requirements.
- **Ontario Building Code (OBC) Accessibility Standards** – Sets accessibility regulations for new constructions and major renovations.

Inclusive Housing Index & Indicator Guide:

- **Creating Inclusive Housing for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities** – A handbook for developers and funders. Provides strategies for affordability, universal design, and community integration.
- **Inclusive Housing Index** – Assesses housing inclusivity across design, accessibility, and affordability.
- **Inclusive Housing Scorecard** - DSO Housing Navigators have developed this tool based on the My Home My Community's Inclusive Housing Index. This quantifies scoring weights and metrics to provide a standardized framework for evaluating projects on inclusivity, accessibility, and sustainability.

Inclusive Housing Scorecard

Instructions

For each category, rate the Housing development based on the scoring criteria provided.

- **0 = Not Present** (No evidence of this factor in the development)
- **1 = Poor** (Minimal consideration, major barriers to inclusion)
- **2 = Fair** (Some considerations, but gaps remain)
- **3 = Good** (Meets minimum standards for inclusion)
- **4 = Very Good** (Strong implementation, with minor gaps)
- **5 = Excellent** (Fully meets best practices for inclusion)

Scorecard Table

Pillar	Indicator	Score (0-5)
Participation	Involvement of individuals with disabilities in design	
	Involvement of support providers in design	
Neighbourhood	Walkability (proximity to services)	
	Safety (crime rate, environmental safety)	
	Public transit access	
	Accessible transit availability	
Support Arrangements	Community readiness (local support networks)	
	Choice in residence selection	
	Ability to have overnight guests	
	Freedom to enter/leave freely	
	Choice of roommates/visitors	



B. Stakeholder Engagement

Collaboration is essential for fostering inclusive housing solutions. **Section 3** of this guide outlines a broad range of key stakeholders in an inclusive housing network. In this section, we focus on two stakeholder groups. By highlighting these groups, we aim to emphasize their vital roles while maintaining a concise and actionable approach to this resource section.

Individuals with Lived Experience

This section provides essential links to advocacy organizations and support resources for adults with IDD and their support networks:

- [People First of Canada](#) – Represents individuals with intellectual disabilities and advocates for their inclusion.
- [Inclusion Canada](#) – Promotes the full inclusion and human rights of people with intellectual disabilities.
- [Disability Justice Network of Ontario \(DJNO\)](#) – Works toward accessibility, education, and advocacy.
- [Canadian Centre for Housing Rights](#) - Canada's leading non-profit organization working to advance the right to housing.
- [Developmental Services Ontario \(DSO\) Housing Toolkit](#) – Provides strategic planning tools for collaboration, accessibility, and long-term housing sustainability.

Housing Developers & Promoters

Organizations that specialize in accessible and inclusive housing development:

- [L'Arche Canada - Inclusive Housing Solutions](#) – Creates affordable, accessible homes that foster community connection.
- [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation \(CMHC\)](#) – Promotes universal design and inclusive housing development.
- [My Home My Community](#) – Supports inclusive, affordable housing projects for individuals with disabilities.
- [Intentional Community Consortium](#) – Develops accessible, community-integrated housing solutions.



C. Sustainable Funding & Financial Models

Securing sustainable funding is essential for the long-term success of inclusive housing initiatives. The funding landscape is constantly evolving, and new resources may become available while others may change or phase out. While we have compiled a list of current funding opportunities, we encourage organizations and communities in Ontario to stay informed and regularly check for updates from relevant funding bodies.

By leveraging the following resources, organizations can develop and sustain inclusive housing initiatives that support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Government Grants & Programs

- [**Affordable Housing Fund \(CMHC\)**](#) – Offers loans for building and renewing affordable housing.
- [**Affordable Housing Innovation Fund \(CMHC\)**](#) – Supports innovative financing models for inclusive housing.
- [**Co-op Housing Development Program \(CMHC\)**](#) – Provides financial support for new cooperative housing projects.
- [**Canada Greener Affordable Housing Program**](#) – Funds energy-efficient upgrades in affordable housing.
- [**Ontario Trillium Foundation**](#) – Grants for inclusive housing initiatives.
- [**Inclusive Community Grants Program \(Ontario\)**](#) – Funds accessibility and inclusion projects.
- [**Enabling Accessibility Fund \(EAF\)**](#) – Supports accessibility improvements in housing.
- [**Seed Funding \(CMHC\)**](#) – Financial assistance to help community housing providers with costs of early development activities.
- [**National Housing Strategy \(NHS\)**](#) – A federal initiative supporting accessible and affordable housing solutions.

Philanthropic & Community Based Funding

- [**GrantWatch - Disabilities Grants**](#) – A comprehensive listing of grants available for housing and disability-related projects in Ontario.
- [**Philanthropic Foundations Canada**](#) – Provides funding opportunities for housing initiatives.



Local Municipal Programs

Many municipalities offer additional funding, tax incentives, or policy support to encourage the development of affordable and inclusive housing.

- **Municipal Housing Grants and Loans** - Some cities provide direct funding for non-profits and developers working on inclusive housing.
- **Property Tax Incentives** - Some municipalities offer tax breaks or deferrals for affordable housing projects.
- **Zoning and Land Use Incentives** - Programs such as Inclusionary Zoning policies (see **section D** below) allow for reduced development charges for projects that include affordable housing.
- **Development Fee Deferral Programs** - Incentives used by municipalities which allow developers to postpone paying municipal charges associated with developments.

Local governments often update these programs based on community needs, so it's important to check with municipal housing departments for the latest opportunities.

Social Finance & Impact Investment

- **Tapestry Community Capital** – Helps organizations raise funds through community bonds.
- **Community Land Trusts & Housing Co-operatives** - Maintain affordability through community-owned housing models.
- **Impact Investment Funds** - Support sustainable housing while generating financial returns.
 - **Toronto Foundation** – Invests in social impact projects, including affordable housing.

D. Implementing Policy & Legislative Frameworks

Effective policy implementation is key to advancing inclusive housing. Below are relevant legislative references, tools, and programs:

Inclusionary Zoning & Affordable Housing Policies

Inclusionary Zoning policies require a percentage of certain large new residential developments to be set aside for affordable housing. Some Ontario municipalities have recently begun implementing these policies under the Planning Act to increase affordable housing. See the [Provincial Planning Statement, 2024](#).

- [Ontario's Inclusionary Zoning Regulation](#) – Outlines municipal requirements for affordable housing.
- [Association of Municipalities Ontario \(AMO\) Housing Policy](#) - Advocacy, policy guidance, and municipal strategies for inclusionary zoning in Ontario.
- [Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association \(ONPHA\) - Inclusionary Zoning](#) - An organization that leads, supports, and advocates for the non-profit housing sector to deliver safe and affordable housing in Ontario.

Legislation & Standards for Support Services

This section highlights key laws and regulations that guide the development and delivery of housing and support services for individuals with IDD.

- [Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008](#) - Ontario law that sets the framework for funding and regulating services and supports for adults with developmental disabilities, aiming to promote their social inclusion.
- [Quality Assurance Measures Reg. 299/10](#) – QAM are rules that help agencies and Developmental Services Ontario provide high quality services and supports and meet set standards when funded by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services to provide services and supports to people with developmental disabilities.



D. Implementing Policy & Legislative Frameworks

Rental Assistance Programs

Rental Assistance Programs support individuals with IDD by subsidizing rent costs and ensuring long-term housing affordability. In addition to the resources below many local municipalities offer rental assistance in the form of subsidies as well as housing allowance programs tailored to community needs.

- **Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB)** - Federal-provincial housing allowance program that provides monthly portable benefits directly to eligible low- and moderate-income households to assist with rental costs.
- **Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)** - Assists with living costs, including housing.
- **Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) Assistance** - Households receiving RGI assistance typically pay 30% of their income on rent.

Conclusion

Building inclusive housing requires collaboration, sustainable funding, and proactive policy implementation. By leveraging these tools and resources, stakeholders can create accessible, affordable, and community-integrated housing solutions. Moving forward, a collective effort from policymakers, developers, advocates, and individuals with lived experience will ensure that housing remains inclusive and equitable for all.



7. Measuring Success

Creating inclusive housing for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) requires a coordinated effort among individuals with lived experience, housing developers, service providers, policymakers, and advocacy groups. Success should be evaluated through well-defined metrics that assess housing stability, community integration, affordability, and long-term sustainability (Inclusion Canada, n.d.). Assessment tools and collaborative partnerships can enhance housing outcomes and support scalable, effective solutions.

Individuals with IDD & their Families

For individuals with IDD and their families, success in housing is defined by autonomy, stability, and meaningful community participation. Key indicators include the ability to choose and personalize living arrangements, access necessary support services, and maintain long-term housing stability (Community Living Ontario, 2022). Engaging individuals with IDD in policy discussions and co-design ensures that their lived experiences directly shape inclusive housing models.

To evaluate the effectiveness of inclusive housing initiatives, measures such as housing stability, personal well-being, community engagement, and social integration should be assessed (Roebuck, 2021). The extent of social and economic integration—including employment rates, civic participation, and access to community services—provides valuable insight into how well these initiatives promote independence (Emerson et al., 2014).

Housing Developers & Providers

Housing developers and providers are instrumental in expanding inclusive housing by integrating accessible units within mixed-income developments, adhering to universal design principles, and ensuring long-term affordability (Community Ventures, 2022).

Success metrics for housing providers should include:

- The number of inclusive housing units developed
- Occupancy rates for adults with IDD
- Compliance with accessibility and universal design standards
- Tenant satisfaction and retention rates

A standardized evaluation tool, such as the Inclusive Housing Scorecard, developed by DSO Housing Navigators (see **Section 6**) and based on My Home My Community's Inclusive Housing Index, can be used to support the assessment of inclusivity, accessibility, and sustainability. Ongoing tenant feedback and refinement of evaluation tools will further enhance housing models to meet evolving needs.

Community Service Organizations

Community service organizations help individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) live independently by providing housing, employment, healthcare, and social support (Canadian Human Rights Commission [CHRC], 2024). Their impact can be measured through:

- **Housing stability** – Tracking individuals in long-term independent housing vs. institutions (CHRC, 2024).

- **Community participation** – Measuring employment, social program access, and inclusive housing involvement (Autism Alliance of Canada, 2022).
- **Reduced emergency interventions** – Monitoring declines in hospitalizations, evictions, and crisis-based services (CHRC, 2024)

Strengthening partnerships between government and community organizations enhances service effectiveness and supports sustainable housing for individuals with IDD (CHRC, 2024).

Government Agencies & Policymakers

Government agencies can assess inclusive housing for adults with IDD using key metrics: stability, integration, affordability, and sustainability (Reid et al., 2020; Roebuck, 2021). For example:

- Stability can be measured by housing retention and reduced institutionalization. Programs like Bridges to Housing have shown that cross-sector supports lead to lasting housing success (Reid et al., 2020)
- Integration should track social engagement and employment, as community-based settings foster inclusion (Reid et al., 2020)
- Affordable housing options could be assessed by tracking access to RGI assistance or other subsidies
- Sustainability depends on tracking long-term outcomes, transitions to independent living, and policy compliance (Esteban et al., 2021)

Data-driven evaluations will ensure inclusive housing is effective and sustainable.

Advocacy Organizations and Community Allies

Advocacy organizations and community allies play a critical role in advancing inclusive housing policies, influencing funding decisions, and raising public awareness about the benefits of inclusive housing. Their impact can be measured by:

- Legislative progress on inclusive housing policies
- Increased public engagement in housing initiatives
- Media impact and effectiveness of awareness campaigns

These measures reflect how advocates and allies can not only drive policy and funding decisions but can also amplify the voices of individuals with lived experience, challenge systemic barriers, and foster a cultural shift toward inclusion. Much like their influence on the community living movement, advocate and ally efforts can shape a future where inclusive housing is not just an option but a fundamental right.

Conclusion

Expanding and sustaining inclusive housing for adults with IDD requires a strong evaluation framework that prioritizes quality of life, housing stability, and community integration. To be truly effective, these frameworks must include the voices of individuals with IDD, using their experiences to measure progress and shape policies in real time. By improving assessment tools, strengthening cross-sector collaboration, and fostering shared responsibility among stakeholders, inclusive housing initiatives can continue to evolve and improve. A commitment to meaningful, measurable outcomes—driven by those directly impacted—ensures that people with IDD can live with dignity, independence, and full participation in their communities (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2024).



8. Advocacy & Awareness Strategies for Inclusive Housing

Ensuring access to inclusive housing requires robust advocacy efforts and sustained public awareness. Without active engagement from communities and policymakers, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) will continue to face systemic barriers to securing safe, affordable, and supportive housing. This section outlines key advocacy strategies, emphasizing policy change, community participation, and public awareness initiatives rooted in equity and dignity.



Integrating an Intersectional Approach

Effective advocacy must acknowledge the diverse challenges faced by marginalized populations. Factors such as race, gender, disability, economic status, and cultural background influence housing access. Instead of reiterating intersectionality concepts previously discussed, this section reinforces the importance of applying an equity lens in housing policy (see **Section 2**).

Advocacy efforts should prioritize intersectional equity assessments, track disparities through data collection, and ensure that housing providers receive mandatory cultural competency training (Concannon, 2022).

Community Engagement: Inclusive Participation & Representation

For advocacy to be meaningful, inclusive dialogue spaces must be created to ensure that all voices are heard. Key steps include:

- **Removing Barriers to Participation:** Meetings and forums must be fully accessible in compliance with Ontario’s accessibility laws, offering accommodations such as sign language interpretation, virtual attendance options, and childcare assistance (OMSSA, 2013).
- **Lived Experience Leadership:** Adopting a "nothing about us without us" model empowers individuals with IDD to shape housing policies. Establishing Lived Experience Advisory Councils ensures direct input into policy decisions (Schwan & Perucca, 2022).

Cross-Sector Collaboration: Effective advocacy requires engagement across sectors. The 2024 Inclusive Housing Forum in Ontario, hosted by the Intentional Community Consortium (ICC), gathered over 65 representatives from government, service organizations, and housing developers to discuss solutions (KWHAB, 2024).

Policy Advocacy: Strengthening Housing Support Systems

To drive systemic change, advocacy efforts should focus on legislative reform, funding, and public accountability. Effective strategies include:

- **Coalitions and Campaigns:** Organizations such as the AODA Alliance continue to push for stronger residential accessibility standards (AODA Alliance, 2025). Similarly, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) successfully advocates for increased funding, securing over \$23 billion for affordable housing initiatives (ONPHA, 2024).
- **Government Relations and Public Education:** Advocacy groups should engage policymakers through policy briefings, election candidate forums, and public consultations. Ontario’s Big City Mayors have urged the provincial government to prioritize inclusive housing solutions, illustrating the impact of collective municipal advocacy (Ontario Big City Mayors, 2025).





Raising Public Awareness: Storytelling and Media Engagement

Public support for inclusive housing can be strengthened through storytelling and media outreach. Effective methods include:

- **Personal Narratives:** Sharing real-life experiences humanizes the issue and fosters empathy. The Accessible Housing Network (AHN, 2024) compiles first-person accounts to advocate for policy changes, while People First of Canada uses blogs and videos to highlight housing experiences (L'Arche Canada, 2024).
- **Leveraging Media and Social Platforms:** Digital campaigns and media coverage play a critical role in awareness-building. Success stories of inclusive housing projects have been featured in national press outlets, underscoring the benefits of mixed-ability and mixed-income communities (CHFC Canada, 2023). Media campaigns like the DSO National Housing Day Video (2024) aim to raise awareness and keep inclusive housing issues visible.
- **Community Events and Recognition Initiatives:** Public engagement efforts, such as open houses and storytelling nights, showcase the positive impact of inclusive housing. Additionally, municipal recognition programs—such as Ontario's Community Living Month, which includes lighting the CN Tower in blue and green—foster broader public support (CLPS, 2016).

Conclusion

Advocacy and awareness are essential for advancing inclusive housing. By fostering community involvement, influencing policy, and leveraging storytelling, stakeholders can work towards sustainable change. Applying an intersectional framework ensures that advocacy efforts address systemic disparities and promote culturally responsive housing solutions. Collaboration among individuals with lived experience, policymakers, housing developers, and service providers is key to making inclusive housing a recognized standard rather than an exception.

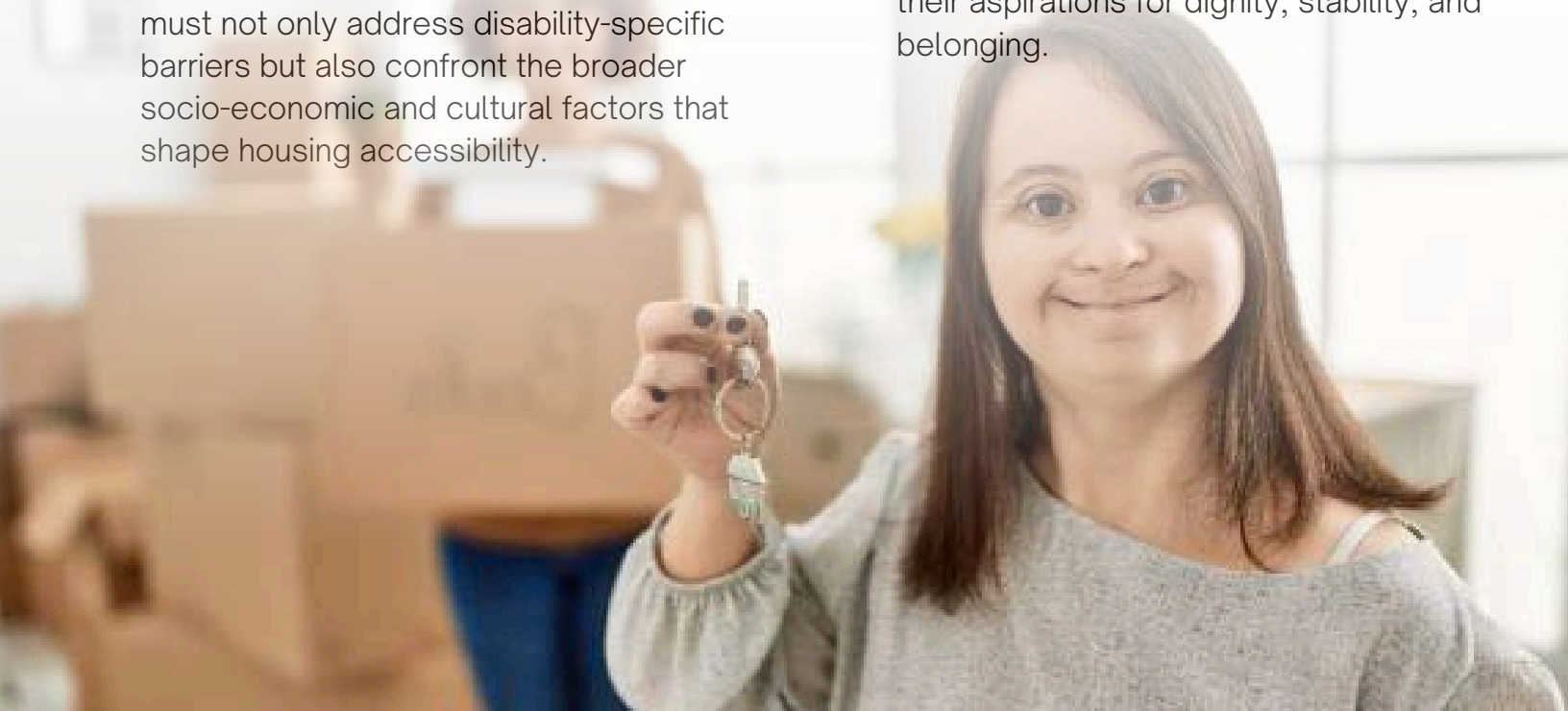
9. Conclusion: A Collective Commitment to Inclusive Housing

Inclusive housing is more than a concept—it is a commitment to fostering communities where everyone, regardless of ability, identity, or background, has access to safe, affordable, and supportive housing. Throughout this guide, we have explored the essential components of inclusive housing, examined the systemic barriers individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) face, and outlined practical strategies to build housing networks rooted in equity, accessibility, and community integration.

An intersectional approach is vital to ensuring inclusive housing truly serves all individuals. As discussed in earlier sections, marginalized communities—including racialized groups, Indigenous populations, LGBTQ+ individuals, and newcomers—face compounded barriers to securing stable housing. Discriminatory practices, cultural exclusion, and inadequate accessibility measures have historically prevented equitable access to safe living environments. Inclusive housing must not only address disability-specific barriers but also confront the broader socio-economic and cultural factors that shape housing accessibility.

Achieving sustainable and inclusive housing requires collaboration, innovation, and sustained advocacy. It is a shared responsibility—one that calls on:

- **Policymakers** to implement equitable legislation, enforce anti-discrimination housing policies, and prioritize funding for community-driven solutions.
- **Housing developers and providers** to embrace universal design principles, support affordability, and integrate diverse housing models that foster community connections.
- **Community service organizations** to offer culturally responsive, wraparound support systems that empower individuals to live independently.
- **Advocates and allies** to amplify voices of individuals with lived experience, push for legislative reforms, and promote awareness of inclusive housing needs.
- **Individuals with IDD and their families** to lead decision-making processes and shape housing solutions that align with their aspirations for dignity, stability, and belonging.





A Call to Action

The path toward inclusive housing demands bold action and sustained commitment. Whether you are a housing provider, an advocate, a policymaker, or a community ally, your role in advancing inclusive housing is critical. By embedding intersectional equity into housing policies, embracing cultural responsiveness, and ensuring that individuals with lived experience lead the conversation, we can collectively dismantle barriers and build lasting solutions.

Now is the time to act. By working together—across sectors, communities, and lived experiences—we can move toward a future where inclusive housing is the norm, not the exception. A future where every person, regardless of ability or background, has the right to live in a home that reflects their choices, values, and full participation in society.

Let's move forward with intention, collaboration, and a shared vision for inclusive communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

References

To ensure you have access to all the links, resources, and references mentioned in this guide, please refer to the electronic version. This version contains clickable links that provide direct access to external resources, frameworks, and additional tools.

For the most up-to-date and comprehensive information, we recommend using the digital format, where you can easily navigate to relevant websites and documents.



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