

Housing Survey of People with Disabilities in Pennsylvania

Prepared by

Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc.

Accessible Dreams, and HANDS

**Executive Summary**

Purpose

In 2012, the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council (PADDC) awarded a grant to Accessible Dreams and two partnering organizations, HANDS and Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc., to carry out the **CHOICE** project (Comprehensive Housing Options in Communities for Everyone) in Western Pennsylvania. *The goal of the project is to identify and implement strategies that will expand accessible and affordable housing options for people with disabilities.*

A key strategy for accomplishing this goal is to promote systems change in how architects, builders, developers, realtors and other public and private housing professionals plan and develop housing. A first step toward implementing systems change was to ensure that the CHOICE Team, PADDC and its partners have a clear understanding of the current housing needs and preferences of people with disabilities.

* The project team developed a housing survey to be distributed to individuals with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth
* Seventeen participating agencies distributed the 36 question electronic survey to over 10,000 individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth.
* Four hundred and sixty-six (466) unduplicated responses were received

Demographics and Current Housing

The survey reached a broad cross section of individuals throughout the Commonwealth:

* There was a wide geographic representation, with 53 of the 67 counties in the state represented
* 49% of respondents were female, 42% male (9% did not indicate gender)
* Average age was 42, with 61% between the ages of 25 and 59
* 34% of respondents had mobility impairments
* A wide range of incomes was represented, including 29% with incomes below $1,000 per month and 13% greater than $2,500 per month
* 44% of the respondents were employed
* 60% had SSI or SSDI as their primary source of income
* 57% currently live with family members and 27% live alone
* 53% live in homes that are owned, a rate far below Pennsylvania’s homeownership rate of 70%
* 11% of respondents live in subsidized housing, although many don’t know if their housing is subsidized.
* 43% currently receive services--- most often attendant care, transportation and assistance with shopping
* 61% currently depend on cars, family or friends for transportation
* 32% use public transportation or paratransit to get around







Housing Satisfaction and Interest in Moving

Survey participants were asked about satisfaction with their current housing:

* 74% indicated satisfaction with their current housing
* A majority noted satisfaction due to living in a safe or familiar neighborhood; in a convenient location, or in a home in good condition
* 26% reported dissatisfaction with their current housing
* Dissatisfaction was due to their home being too expensive, too small, inconveniently located, or in poor condition
* Respondents who noted barriers in their current homes especially had difficulty reaching all areas, kitchen cabinets, and stove
* Major reasons for not making needed changes to their homes include affordability and/or the need for help in figuring out what changes are needed and how to make them
* Despite the fact that 74% were satisfied with their current housing, 79% of respondents stated a willingness to move; this most likely reflects the many young adults who currently live with family members but would prefer to establish their own households
* 45% of the respondents said that if they were to move, they would go to friends or family for help finding a place; 39% would turn to a public service agency
* Just over half of the respondents stated that they would need assistance with both finding the right place to move and with the move itself

 



Housing Preferences

In describing the place to which they would like to move:

* 41% of respondents indicated that they would like to move within the same community, reflecting the desire to stay near friends, family and other existing supports
* 51% expressed a preference for moving to a single-family or 2 family home
* 23% prefer to move to an apartment
* 11% expressed an interest in a shared housing arrangement
* 53% said they would be willing to have a roommate in order to make their housing more affordable
* 44% prefer neighbors of all ages and 42% have no preference
* 78% prefer to move to a place that accepts pets

Barriers to Moving

When asked to identify barriers to moving:

* 79% noted concern about finding a home they can afford
* Many are not familiar with subsidized housing and other resources available to assist in making their housing more affordable
* 46% felt they would have difficulty finding housing that meets their accessibility needs
* 34% fear the potential loss of services, since many survey respondents receive supports and services from family members with whom they live 



Conclusions

In many ways the housing needs and preference of people with disabilities are *the same as everyone else:*

* They prefer to live in single family or two family homes that are in good condition and have sufficient space
* They want to live in safe neighborhoods that are near family and friends and are convenient to services and amenities

In other ways, many people with disabilities have *special needs,* including:

* Accessibility in their homes
* Access to supports and services

People with disabilities also have a critical *need for assistance* including:

* Determining what changes are needed in their current home and how to make them
* Finding a new home
* Moving from their current home
* Learning about available housing resources and how to access them

People with disabilities of ALL incomes need *access to barrier free housing*. Members of the housing industry must be encouraged to:

* Apply principles of universal design
* Meet the need for all size units
* Consider expansion of non-traditional housing options such as shared housing



Finally, the survey findings provide a blueprint for future activities of the project team, PADDC and its other partners in:

* Educating members of the public and private housing industries about the housing needs and preferences of individuals with disabilities
* Advocating for systems change in the planning and development of housing that meets their stated needs and preferences

A full copy of the survey report can be found on the following websites:

[www.paddc.org](http://www.paddc.org)

[www.accessibledreams.org](http://www.accessibledreams.org)

[www.dma-housing.com](http://www.dma-housing.com)