

COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING GUIDE



SPONSORED BY:
*The Florida
Developmental
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A RESOURCE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

*How to Engage in Local Planning for Affordable,
Accessible, Inclusive Housing*

*This Initiative is Sponsored by US Department of
Health and Human Services, Administration on
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the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.*



INTRODUCTION



The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) is made up of a group of people who work to create helpful programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

The Council helps Floridians with I/DD participate in all aspects of life. To fund its programs, the Council receives money from the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Developmental Disabilities.



One important goal of the Council is to help people with I/DD find good places to live that are safe, inclusive, and accessible.

It is important that people with I/DD know how to get involved in the process of finding good housing.

This guide is a tool to provide help. There are 6 sections.

- 1. *Community-Based Planning: Explains what community-based planning is.***
- 2. *Federal Programs/Planning Processes: Explains how decisions are made about using United States government money for planning.***
- 3. *State Programs/Planning Processes: Explains how decisions are made about using Florida government money for planning.***
- 4. *Community Participation: Helps people with I/DD understand how they can get involved in planning.***
- 5. *Case Study: An example of how one city helped a community get involved in the planning process.***
- 6. *Recommendations: The most important part of the guide. It explains how you can get involved in planning and funding decisions. It helps you learn how to make the voices of persons with disabilities be heard.***

BACKGROUND



In 1994, the United States Social Security Act made it possible for people with I/DD to receive care services in their homes or communities, rather than in institutions. The goal is to make sure people with I/DD are not separated from their communities. Since then, several new rules and laws have been created to help achieve this goal.

In Florida, it can be difficult to follow the new rules and guidelines. This is because our state has very little affordable, accessible, inclusive housing for people with I/DD.

To address this challenge, the Council has created this Community-Based Planning Guide in partnership with the Florida Housing Coalition. The purpose of the guide is to help people with I/DD get more involved in planning and decision-making when it comes to their own housing.

STUDY OF HOUSING PROGRAMS

Many federal and state programs have been identified as important sources of funds that help local governments in Florida work on housing projects. The Council studied the following programs to gather information:

- The Community Development Block Grant
- HOME Investment Partnership
- Emergency Solutions Grant
- Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS
- State Housing Initiatives Partnership



STUDY OF HOUSING PROGRAMS

The Council created a survey to gather more information about housing programs for people with I/DD. Organizations in Florida that provide housing with government money completed the Council's survey. The survey questions were designed to gather input about how people with I/DD in Florida receive housing help.

Housing Survey Topics

- *Local programs that help people with I/DD get involved in housing planning*
- *Media outlets that advertise housing planning programs*
- *People and organizations that are most involved in housing planning*
- *Local government policies related to housing planning*
- *Amount of local government money used for housing planning for people with I/DD*
- *Partnerships between community development staff and local organizations that help with housing planning for people with I/DD*

After the email survey, the Council followed up by phone with the people who received the survey to gather more information.

2 Key Findings

- 1.** *Local governments mostly communicate with persons with disabilities through community meetings and public hearings. These meetings and hearings are usually advertised through local newspapers. Most of the people who attend these meetings are service providers.*
- 2.** *Most local governments do not have their own methods for including persons with disabilities in housing planning. Local governments tend to fall back on federal regulations. However, most people surveyed said that local governments have put aside money to make housing for people with I/DD a priority.*

The results of the survey were used to create the Recommendations included at the end of this guide.



COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING

Public Input is Important to Planning

Community-based planning is a way to plan for local housing costs. This process is important because it affects how state and federal housing money is spent.

The goal of community-based planning is to be inclusive and to support fair housing.

Local governments often base their housing plans on state or federal models. However, people living in a community are often a better source of information about what they need. Community-based planning creates opportunities for local people to be heard.

This is very important for persons with disabilities. In community-based planning, people with I/DD can:

- *raise awareness*
- *have their voices heard*
- *inquire about current local spending*
- *provide suggestions for future projects*
- *influence how much money is received from state and federal housing funds*
- *influence which people will benefit from housing programs*

What about the HCBS rule?

The Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) rule is designed to improve the quality of services for people receiving HCBS waivers. It must provide ways to ensure people with disabilities are no longer placed in institutions but are included in their communities.

Community-based planning helps make sure that there are enough affordable, inclusive housing options so that the HCBS rule is met.

Planning efforts can influence:

- *Rental Housing Development*
- *Rental Assistance*
- *ADA Accessibility*
- *Provision of Services*

FEDERAL PROGRAMS/ PLANNING PROCESSES

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is responsible for overseeing housing funds in the United States. Cities and towns get government housing money through 4 major federal programs.

- 1. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT.**
Provides money for community revitalization, including affordable housing. Activities must do one of the following:
 - a. benefit low-income and moderate-income people*
 - b. prevent or eliminate blight*
 - c. address urgent community development needs*

- 2. HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM**
The largest federal block grant protecting affordable housing for low-income households. Activities must assist low-income and/or very low-income households.

- 3. EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT PROGRAM**
A federal grant that helps people who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless. The program can provide rent assistance and permanent supportive housing for people with I/DD.

- 4. HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH AIDS**
Helps low-income people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. Money is given to local communities, states, and nonprofit organizations to carry out a range of services.



CONSOLIDATED PLANNING

To remain eligible for the programs described above, organizations receiving grants must complete “Consolidated Planning” to demonstrate need and measure success.

CONSOLIDATED PLAN

A Consolidated Plan is a different tool than Consolidated Planning. The purpose of this document is to identify housing needs and create ideas for meeting those needs. The Consolidated Plan states how federal funds from the programs listed earlier will be spread out among activities.

Citizen Participation Plan

Organizations that provide housing with government funds are required to get input from the public on how housing money is spent. These organizations create a Citizen Participation Plan to explain how they will get feedback from the public in 4 main areas.

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

After the Consolidated Plan is created, each year an Annual Action Plan will summarize the activities and programs that will be carried out. This document is used to apply for funding for the 4 programs listed on the previous page.

CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION REPORT

The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) is required by HUD grantees to measure program performance. The CAPER must include:

- *resources and explanation of how they were invested*
- *places the resources were invested*
- *families and people helped*
- *other actions taken to support fair housing*

The CAPER shows that federal rules are being followed and describes the progress of the goals stated in the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan.

FAIR HOUSING PLANNING

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to refuse to sell, rent, or loan housing money to people based on their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, family status, or disability. HUD's Fair Housing Planning (FHP) program is designed to fight discrimination and give people more choices in housing.

ANALYSIS OF IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING CHOICE

This program is a process that enables organizations to identify barriers to fair housing within their communities.

STATE PROGRAMS/ PLANNING PROCESSES

This summary presents key points about important state programs for housing and community development.

7. STATE HOUSING INITIATIVES PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (SHIP)

This program is managed by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC). SHIP's goal is to build partnerships that will create affordable housing in Florida. All 67 counties in Florida are served through SHIP. In order to receive funding, local governments must:

- *Develop a Local Housing Assistance Plan*
- *Change land development regulations or create policies to make developers want to build affordable housing*
- *Form partnerships and combine resources to reduce housing costs*
- *Make sure that rent or mortgage payments within the community are not higher than what most people living in the area can afford. This is usually 30 percent of the area's average income limits. In some cases, there may be an exception to this rule if the mortgage lender allows it.*



SHIP funds can be used for:

- *emergency housing repairs*
- *new home construction*
- *renovation*
- *down payments and closing costs*
- *impact fees*
- *construction and gap financing*
- *mortgage buy-downs*
- *eviction prevention*
- *rental assistance*
- *buying property for affordable housing*
- *matching dollars for federal housing grants and programs*
- *homeownership counseling*

2. LOCAL HOUSING ASSISTANCE PLAN (LHAP)

This plan is required of all SHIP grantees so they will be eligible for funding through the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC). The LHAP describes the community's plans to spend SHIP funds. Local governments ask for guidance from residents and community partners to create the LHAP.

3. SHIP ANNUAL REPORT

Each community participating in SHIP must submit a yearly report describing its local affordable housing program costs and describing the people who benefitted from the program.

4. COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Local governments are required by State law to have a Comprehensive Plan in place. This helps define goals, objectives, and policies that describe how the local government's programs, activities, and land development regulations will be carried out.

5. HOUSING ELEMENT

All Comprehensive Plans are required to have a Housing Element. This describes the plans that will be followed in order to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing in the community.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION



Community participation is an opportunity for people to get involved in decisions that affect them. It is one of the most important parts of successful planning efforts.

CONSOLIDATED PLANNING / FAIR HOUSING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

State and local government HUD grantees are required to create and follow a Citizen Participation Plan (CPP). This describes the grantee's policies and procedures for community participation in Consolidated and Fair Housing Planning. The plan should include:

- *Public hearings to receive comments from community members*
- *Consulting with public and private agencies that provide housing, health services, and fair housing services*

SHIP COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Community participation is encouraged through the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC).

The AHAC is a group of people that looks at existing policies, procedures, rules, and plans and then makes recommendations that encourage affordable housing. The people on this committee should come from fields related to housing, including construction, banking, real estate, and government.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

For Comprehensive Planning, community participation is required. The local government must hold at least 2 advertised public hearings on the proposed comprehensive plan, plan element, or plan amendment. Local governments should hold additional community meetings throughout the process to involve the public and gather input.

CASE STUDY

In 2018, the City of Jacksonville/Duval County received almost \$14 million in federal and state funding under the CDBG, HOME, ESG, HOPWA, and SHIP programs. Jacksonville/Duval County will follow its Citizen Participation Plan to encourage Community-Based Planning in the creation of a Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and CAPER.

The City of Jacksonville held two public meetings along with 4-6 Citizen Participation Action Council meetings to gather public input. The City also posted a survey on its website and encouraged the public to respond. In addition, the City holds monthly meetings of its 11-member Jacksonville Housing and Community Development Commission (JHCDC).



As a result of the input received, funding for permanent supportive housing (new or rehabilitated units) was included in the Annual Action Plan and the City published a request for proposals (RFP) for \$1.5 million.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Federal and state housing programs require public hearings. Speak directly with elected officials about the housing needs of people with I/DD.**
- 2. Many local governments hold community meetings for public input. These are a less formal way to discuss local housing needs. Give your opinion and make suggestions.**
- 3. Affordable Housing Advisory Council (AHAC) meetings are open to the public. Attend and make comments for the Local Housing Assistance Plan (LHAP).**
- 4. Some housing programs have an online survey. Fill this out to offer ideas about what is important.**
- 5. Provide current information to local government, including summaries of your agency reports. Be sure program websites are up to date and easy to use.**
- 6. Federal and state planning offers a chance for public comment. Disability advocates should read plans and make suggestions and corrections.**
- 7. Some communities that receive grants are required to have performance reports to measure the helpfulness of programs. Review these reports to learn which activities are being done.**
- 8. Local advocates and service providers should work together so accurate data is provided to local governments. Regular meetings with a representative from each disability organization makes advocacy better.**
- 9. Housing forums are opportunities to learn about local housing needs, programs available, and active initiatives. Disability advocates and providers should ask about future housing forums and offer to present.**
- 10. Some programs require at least one representative of someone in need of affordable housing. A person from the disability community should be involved with decisions.**
- 11. Many local governments form councils or boards related to affordable housing. People with disabilities should hold positions that could create change.**
- 12. Local governments should have community engagement strategies for people with disabilities. A guidebook can teach elected officials and department staff that traditional methods of community participation may not work for everyone.**