

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN



## A RESOURCE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

*Advice and support for talking about affordable, accessible, inclusive housing in your community.*

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

**FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL**



## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Community Engagement Plan is a **guide** that will help you talk to local government about **housing**.



The guide will tell you about government programs that pay for housing in your community.

These programs can make safe housing that most people can afford.

The guide will help you talk to leaders about the kind of housing you think is most important.

You can read the guide from start to finish or read different sections at different times.

On the last 2 pages, you will find a list of words you may not have seen before.

The Words List will help you understand these terms.

If you do not understand any part of this document, please ask someone to help.

## INTRODUCTION



The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and the Florida Housing Coalition (FHC) created this Community Engagement Plan.

The goal is to improve how Florida spends money on housing for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

### THIS HOUSING SHOULD BE:

- **Affordable.** Housing costs should be low enough that people can pay them.
- **Accessible.** Housing should be designed for the needs of people with I/DD.
- **Inclusive.** Housing should be part of the larger community, not set apart for people with I/DD.



## BACKGROUND

In 1994, the **United States Social Security Act** said people with I/DD should receive care in their homes or communities, not in **institutions**.



Since then, new rules and laws have been created to help achieve this goal.

In Florida, it can be difficult to follow the new rules.

This is because our state has very little good housing for people with I/DD.

The Council created a Community-Based Planning Guide to help people with I/DD get more involved in housing planning.

The **recommendations** that came from that guide are listed on the next 3 pages.

# COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING GUIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.** *People with I/DD and their advocates should attend public hearings for federal and state housing programs. They can speak with leaders at these hearings.*
- 2.** *People with I/DD and their advocates can give their opinions and make suggestions at local community meetings.*
- 3.** *People with I/DD and their advocates should attend and make comments at Affordable Housing Advisory Council (AHAC) meetings.*

**4.** *Some housing programs have an online survey. People with I/DD and their advocates should fill out these surveys to offer ideas about what is important.*

**5.** *Disability service providers should give current information to local government. They should be sure their websites are up-to-date and easy to use.*

**6.** *People with I/DD and their advocates should read federal and state plans and make suggestions and corrections.*

**7.** *People with I/DD and their advocates should review the reports of housing programs to learn about what is being done.*

**8.** *People with I/DD and their advocates should work together with disability service providers. They should give good information and feedback to local governments.*

**9.**

***People with I/DD and their advocates should find out about housing forums and offer to make a presentation.***

**10.**

***People with I/DD and their advocates should get involved with programs for affordable housing.***

**11.**

***People with I/DD and their advocates should hold positions on local government teams that are working on housing.***

**12.**

***Local governments should have community engagement tools for people with disabilities. A guidebook is a good example.***

## METHOD

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Here's how the Community Engagement Plan was created:

People from the community shared with FDDC and FHC what they thought about the recommendations from the Community-Based Planning Guide.

They talked about problems that might prevent people from following the Guide's recommendations.

They also wanted to focus on the recommendations which seemed most important.

The information they shared helped create this Community Engagement Plan.



# HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES

This Community Engagement Plan presents 5 “**high-impact**” **strategies**.

These are ideas that will make a big difference to improve housing for people with I/DD.



# HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES

## 7. *Attend all public hearings/community meetings related to the housing issue.*

**WHO: SERVICE PROVIDERS AND SELF-ADVOCATES**

**WHY: TO TELL ELECTED LEADERS ABOUT HOUSING NEEDS**

### **CHALLENGES**

### **WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?**

*Finding transportation to meetings*

*Accessibility*

*Paying for care for special needs people at the meetings*

*Limited time*

*Lack of notice*

*Learn how to present in meetings*

*Produce meeting notices in Easy Read format*

*Work with staff to better serve people with I/DD during meetings*

*Request accommodations for people with I/DD*



# HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES

## 2. *Provide local government with information about disability needs.*

**WHO: SERVICE PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

**WHY: TO TELL ELECTED LEADERS ABOUT HOUSING NEEDS**

### **CHALLENGES**

***Lack of information***

***Groups not working together***



### **WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?**

***Keep better track of information***

***Help groups share information***

***Decide on types of information to include in planning***

***Create websites to share information***

***Create easy ways to submit information to government***

# HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES

## 3. *Work with local advocacy organizations and service providers.*

**WHO: SERVICE PROVIDERS AND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS**

**WHY: TO GET BETTER RESULTS BY WORKING TOGETHER**

### **CHALLENGES**

### **WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?**

*Groups stay separated*

*Groups do not want to work together*

*Group attendance is poor*

*Lack of time*

*Lack of information*

*Improve communication between groups*

*Hold regular meetings*

*Encourage people to come to meetings*

*Act on all plans made at meetings*

*Make meeting times and places more convenient*

*Identify sources of money for planning*



## HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES

### 4. Participate in local or regional housing forums.

**WHO: SERVICE PROVIDERS AND SELF-ADVOCATES**

**WHY: TO LET MORE PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT HOUSING NEEDS**

#### CHALLENGES

#### WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

**Forums are long**

**Paying for care for special needs people at the meetings**

**Forums cost too much**

**Finding transportation to forums**

**Accessibility**

**Provide time for advance planning**

**Provide *financial aid* for forums**

**Provide transportation and hotels**

**Provide financial aid for care for people with special needs**

**Provide accommodations**



## HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES

### 5. *Develop an easy way (like a guidebook) to engage people with I/DD and their families.*

**WHO: ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS**

**WHY: TO IMPROVE HOW GOVERNMENTS CONNECT WITH PEOPLE WITH I/DD AND THEIR FAMILIES**

#### **CHALLENGES**

*Not enough input from people with I/DD and their families*

*No group to lead the effort*

*Local government not participating in the effort*

#### **WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?**

*Create a complete plan*

*Find money for planning*

*Connect with **vocational rehabilitation** providers*

*Create a guidebook for local governments*





# WORDS LIST

**Accessible** - easy to approach, use, or enter

**Accommodations** - things that will help a person use services easily

**Advocates** - people who work for the rights or views of someone or something

**Affordable** - having a cost that is not too high

**Affordable Housing Advisory Council** - a group that makes sure people have a place to live and enough money to pay for it

**Community engagement** - people from a town, neighborhood, or group coming together to talk about helping each other

**Disability service provider** - a group that helps find support for people with disabilities

**Engage** - to make someone want to help or think about something

**Federal** - the United States as a whole, instead of states

**Financial aid** - money given to people to help them pay for things like housing

**Guide** - a book or brochure that explains how to do something

**High-impact strategies** - ideas that will make a big difference

**Housing** - a place to live

**Housing forum** - a meeting to help people find houses or apartments to live in

**Inclusive** - making sure people are not left out

**Institutions** - buildings where people are sent to be cared for

**Local** - a smaller part of a state, like a neighborhood or town

**Public hearing** - a meeting where people talk about plans for the future

**Recommendations** - statements that someone or something is good and should be chosen

**State** - smaller parts of the country, instead of the United States as a whole

**United States Social Security Act** - a law to help working people support older people or people with disabilities

**Vocational rehabilitation** - services that help people with disabilities find jobs