**Briefing Note for January 10th 2018 meeting with Minister Jaczek’s Office**

Toronto Developmental Services Alliance (TDSA) is a voluntary organization comprised of 27 developmental services agencies that focus primarily on advocacy, information sharing and developing innovative services and practices that respond to the emerging needs and interests of people with a developmental disability.  We formed the Housing Sub-committee in February 2016 to address the critical shortage of affordable housing for people with a developmental disability.  Some of our accomplishments to-date include:

* Development of a brochure specifically focused on people with a developmental disability and their need for affordable housing – will be utilized as an outreach tool.
* Two housing forums – 46 attendees in October 2016 for TDSA member agency representatives; 83+ attendees in November 2017 including DS agencies in Toronto, family members and representatives from Housing Task Force, DSOTR, MCSS and MOH.
* Hosted a half day session in May 2017 on the importance of designing and building for increased social inclusion spaces in new vertical communities being developed in Toronto – engaged 20+ Planners, Architects, Developers, City of Toronto reps in partnership with BUILD Toronto, Kehilla Residential Programme and PooranLaw.
* Development of a geo map of the residential and respite locations/details for many of the DS agencies in Toronto – informs us of existing or potential neighbourhood supports when contemplating new developments.
* Launched the public site of [tdsa.ca](http://www.tdsa.ca) with housing-related information and resources.
* Outreach to and development with potential partners (public and private) to access affordable housing for people with a developmental disability – this is ongoing as we are tracking a number of opportunities including: Tippett (Allen Rd/Wilson), West Don Lands, Grenville/Grosvenor, Mirvish Village (Bathurst/Bloor), Quarry Lands (Vic Park/Gerrard), Dufferin/Bloor development, and the redevelopment at Church/Jarvis.

As we endeavor to access more affordable housing to increase our capacity for more living options that meet the varying wants and needs of people with a developmental disability, we are also constantly evolving our knowledge and experiential learning. It is difficult to identify all the obstacles and challenges that will be encountered until we are in the midst of a situation. Here are some of the system challenges that we have heard or directly experience impacting increased living options for people with a developmental disability:

1. Limited Options for Transitional Aged Youth

Youth in transition already receiving residential services through Transfer Payment Agencies do not make it on to the prioritization list for adult services. There are limited options for youth with complex support needs who are aging out of the children’s system. There is a need for better flow so these children can transition to adult services, creating access to supports for families who are struggling with complex care needs at home; yet, very critically these young adults with physical, developmental and cognitive challenges that require a higher level of service and technology to meet their needs are not being considered for new adult funding in 2017/18

As an example, Safehaven supports children with complex medical needs by providing respite and residential care in Toronto and Central Regions. Many of these individuals have physical, developmental and cognitive challenges that require a higher level of service and technology to meet their needs. As these children transition into adult services there are very limited to no services available to adequately meet the level of support required in both respite and residential care. Families express the stress of the burden of care and having limited options, especially with respect to respite care and rely on hospitals or long - term care which is inappropriate options.  Safehaven has been working for several years with the MCYS / MCSS, community, families and individuals to expand their services and are willing to acquire housing so that they can provide adult residential supports for this unique group of young adults.

The ability to support adult services with MCSS funding will also create flow for other children who are in need of this type of intensive supports as there is a waitlist for children's residential services. Currently, Safehaven has six (6) adults in children's beds that have aged out.  Safehaven has been highlighting this need and potential to support more children; however, these young adults are not being considered for new adult funding in 2017/18. Organizationally, Safehaven is committed to the transformation agenda and being seen as a solution to the demand for medically complex individuals who are transitioning out of MCYS services.  There has been no forward movement as yet on opening the possibility by recognizing these young adults as a priority for funding.

1. Lack of Residential Options for Individuals/Families

At the TDSA Housing Forum we heard from families who are equally interested in affordable housing opportunities because they have been waiting a long time for residential funding. Families fear they will never be considered a priority, they feel that they cannot wait for a solution that may not come and they want (or need) to create their own living situations. These families have accessed other options for pursuing residential options such as: working with Independent Facilitators, LIGHTS, Residential Alternatives Group or other groups of networked parents across the province. While they appreciate the work of TDSA to access and share information about more affordable housing opportunities, they don’t see an existing pathway in Developmental Services for them to be aware of and have access to such housing opportunities available through DS agencies.

Likewise, there are families who have homes where their family members are living without needed supports; however, their family members are not considered high priority as a result. This is available affordable housing that could support family members with the availability of individually funded budgets.

1. Lack of Capital Funds for New Developments

It is challenging to find new housing developments that are adequately equipped to withstand property damage when individuals with high support/complex needs move in. Likewise, it is difficult to find private developers who are willing to take on the extra costs to create purpose-built housing in this context; or to proceed regardless and risk new partnership opportunities with private housing developers. The alternative result is DS agencies leveraging their own properties or housing to create options; however, they are not able to re-mortgage properties to purchase more properties and the required housing capital funds are not available or easily accessible for redevelopment, renovations and repurposing of existing land or housing.

1. Need for Deeply Affordable Housing Solutions

Low income capacity and ODSP shelter allowance enhance the stigma against people’s viability to be good tenants, which immediately places them at a disadvantage in rental situations. Current ODSP regulations exempting gifts and payments made to ODSP recipients up to $10,000 every 12 months for all non-disability related expenditures will not be able to address the housing gap between the ODSP shelter allowance of $489 for a single person and the increasing AMR + hydro rates.

As well, the above situation is helpful only to individuals with families who are well resourced to support them financially; therefore, this strategy does not help the majority of individuals who are experiencing homelessness, are disengaged from their families or whose families are not able to afford to supplement their rent and utility costs. Even for individuals with a developmental disability who are employed, accessing and affording housing based on Average Market Rent (AMR) prices is still unattainable with other cost of living expenses.

1. Lack of Committed Operating Funds to Help Secure Future Housing Opportunities

Individuals on the residential wait list are not able to access affordable housing through the typical pathways because their access to housing must be accompanied by funded supports for ongoing assistance and stability.

TDSA member agencies are working together to develop community relationships and partnerships to access more affordable housing opportunities; however, without operational funding assurances, agencies supporting people with a developmental disability can face the same stigma regarding our ability to ensure rental payments and this can inhibit our ability to secure new prospects.

As an example, Community Living Toronto is a partner on two new developments with expected occupancy set for our 2018/2019 fiscal year. This leaves us with housing capacity to support more people; however, we do not have any assurances that there will be more people with funding to align with such opportunities. As MCSS is not investing in the expansion of housing capital, DS agencies take on the risk to create capacity for more residential opportunities and options for people who are on the DS residential wait list; however, we cannot provide our Board of Directors and/or private developers with assurances that we will be able to secure government funding to support more people with this increase in housing capacity.

Recommendations and Ideas for increasing affordable housing opportunities:

With increased focus on and potential opportunities for affordable housing that could enable more flexible approaches to housing and supports for people with a developmental disability, here are some recommendations/ideas that would further help our efforts:

1.     To address Limited Options for Transitional Aged Youth

* Support and enable innovative solutions for transitional aged individuals with developmental and/or medical complexities who require respite or residential services to ensure there is a seamless transition. This approach would prevent crisis situations and ensure that individuals and families are supported from childhood into adulthood.
* Invest in transitional learning programs focused on increasing an individual’s preparedness and family readiness for a living situation that creates a path for positive, healthy and safe living experiences as a starting point into adult living options.
* Learn from examples such as STEPS To Independence, Trying It on For Size (TIFS) and TIFS Toronto, as well as several of the Developmental Services Housing Task Force projects focused on housing innovations for transitional aged youth.

2.     To address Lack of Residential Options for Individuals/Families

* Utilize the Housing Navigator positions across the DSOs to act as liaisons and help individuals/families that have accessed alternative supports and are looking for affordable housing to connect with new housing opportunities.
* Enable regions to allot new funding for individuals who are at different levels of prioritization and who have varying levels of support needs so that there is greater flexibility to match people to housing options that are conducive to the supports that are needed at that time (publicly or privately owned apartments/houses versus apartments/houses owned by DS agencies).
* Work with DS agencies to address any system challenges that are inhibiting efforts to provide flexible supports and living options to people in our services as they enter adulthood and develop their skills and independence, as well as when they experience unexpected health or mental health issues and age into their senior years. For example, enable DS agencies to move individuals between different residential services such as SIL to Group Living so that we can better meet their needs rather than have them remain in hospital beds or move to long-term care unnecessarily; thus creating potential to support someone from the wait list who is looking for independent living or funded supports for someone who is in an individualized living situation already (this also creates flexible options for adults with a developmental disability who are left in the family home when a parent passes away).

3.     To address Lack of Capital Funds for New Developments

* Support our message advocating for 5% of new affordable housing to be designated specifically for people with a developmental disability as they typically are not able to navigate the housing landscape like other citizens.
* Partner with DS agencies that are trying to create or access housing opportunities by endorsing them as Transfer Payment Agencies of MCSS as this will enhance the credibility of DS agencies.
* Reiterate with Ministry of Housing and City of Toronto the benefits of community partnerships with service agencies on all RFPs for affordable housing as this will increase supply of new capital, bring supports into the new developments and facilitate/strengthen partnerships between agencies and property managers/landlords.
* Utilize connections to assist with identification of opportunities for future re-developments and renovations.

4.     To address Need for Deeply Affordable Housing Solutions

* Emphasize with Ministry of Housing and City of Toronto (and other regional service managers) the importance of including Depth of Affordability Rental Rates as part of all RFPs for affordable housing (recent Toronto example is the RFP for West Don Lands, Grenville and Grosvenor enabling developers to offer Average Market Rent rates as well as a sliding scale of 80% and 40% AMR).
* Match ODSP rent rates to Average Market Rent (AMR) for the regions so that individuals and their families don’t have to continue “cobbling together” funds to afford decent and safe housing.
* Flex ODSP regulations exempting gifts and payments made to ODSP recipients beyond $10,000 every 12 months for all non-disability related expenditures to help address the housing gap between the ODSP shelter allowance of $489 for a single person and the increasing AMR + hydro rates.

5.     To address Lack of Committed Operating Funds to Help Secure Future Housing Opportunities

* Align Multi Year Residential Planning funding opportunities when DS agencies have successfully secured future housing (as DS agencies do not have the resources to support more people without additional funding).
* Commit operating funds in the near term (now), so that DS agencies can secure deals, develop sites and have them ready for occupancy 2-5 years from now.
* Develop a collaborative relationship for planning with Ministry of Health to avoid opening of acute care beds for Alternative Levels of Care patients when many of these individuals can be safely cared for by the community with appropriate supports.

1. General ideas

* Support the development of a five year strategic plan for developmental services to address the current system pressures and proactively plan for the future. Involving individuals from ministries such as MCSS/ MCYS, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Health, and City of Toronto. Engagement of key stakeholders will ensure that populations at risk are appropriately planned for and funding is aligned to meet system pressures.
* Create a way to continue hearing about the system challenges that DS agencies are facing while trying to create greater capacity and flow within Developmental Services so that we are better serving people who want and need more options and flexible levels of residential supports at different stages of their lives.