



Toronto Developmental Services Alliance

2017 Housing Forum Report



Table of Contents

About the TDSA	...2
Overview of TDSA Work to Date	...3
Summary of Housing Forum Presentations	...6
Housing Forum Discussion Outcomes	...9
Challenges	...10
Current Landscape	...13
Moving Towards Effective Solutions	...15
Recommendations	...17

About the TDSA

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. Collectively, we serve thousands of individuals and families living in the City of Toronto, the GTA and beyond.

Various members of the TDSA were facing similar issues within their agencies maintaining, accessing and developing housing opportunities for the people they serve. These issues are often not agency-based, but part of a larger societal issue which creates barriers for people with a developmental disability accessing affordable and supportive housing. The TDSA formed a Housing Sub-Committee in February 2016 to address these issues and examine the critical shortage of affordable housing (rental and ownership) options available for people with a developmental disability.

The intention of the Housing Sub-Committee is to work together with relevant partners to create new and innovative housing solutions, to ensure that the needs of this population remains an important focus moving forward. The hopes are to have both the short and long-term housing needs of individuals with a developmental disability be addressed through these new and innovative solutions, so that they have the ability to choose where they live and have the ability to live a full life within their communities.

The TDSA held a Housing Forum on November 29, 2017, where various speakers presented on the issue of affordable and supportive housing. Following these presentations, discussions were held with attendees regarding their perspectives of current housing challenges and solutions. This report provides an overview of TDSA work to date, summarizes the Housing Forum presentations and discussions that were held, as well as provides recommendations to address the current housing challenges that were examined.

Members of the TDSA Housing Sub-Committee

Adam Smith (Vita Community Services), Antonet Orlando (Meta Centre), Arthur Mathews (The Salvation Army Broadview Village), Bryan Keshen (Reena), Frances MacNeil (Community Living Toronto), Paul Bruce (Cota), Raphael Arens (L'Arche), Shay Johnson (Housing Navigator), Sherry Gautam (Springboard Services), Susan Bisailon (Safehaven) and Tullio Orlando (Montage Support Services)

Overview of TDSA Work to Date

Since the formation of the Housing Sub-Committee in 2016, its members have been working to promote the housing needs of those with a developmental disability. To date, here is an overview of some of their accomplishments:

TDSA Housing Survey (April 2016)

The Housing Sub-Committee sent out a survey to all TDSA members inquiring about the number of individuals their agency serves as well as any housing services they provide. Here were the results

- 3,400+ individuals are being served by TDSA member agencies within the GTA and beyond
- 190+ owned properties and 400+ units through head leases and referral agreements
- TDSA member organizations are currently partnered with affordable housing developers for 80+ units

Affordable Home Ownership Fact Sheet (July 2016)

- A fact sheet was given to TDSA agencies to disperse to their employees regarding information on what affordable home ownership is and how to access the program
- This fact sheet was made accessible to more than 4,200 full/part-time staff

Inclusionary Zoning Consultation Feedback Form Submission (August 2016)

- TDSA submitted a feedback form to the Ministry of Housing (MOH) regarding the positive impact inclusionary zoning could have for the Developmental Services sector as well as other underserved populations
- 42 organizations, groups, companies across Ontario engaged in this process and their feedback/insight was included in the submission

Affordable and Supportive Housing Information Guide (October 2016)

The Housing Sub-Committee put together a 64 slide presentation providing an overview of affordable and supportive housing while covering a wide scope of resources and topics.

- Provides examples of housing and supportive housing models from a Canadian and international perspectives
- Examines various disability policies from countries around the world

TDSA Affordable and Supportive Housing Forum (October 2016)

The TDSA Housing Sub-Committee hosted its first Housing Forum which covered topics ranging from current affordable housing opportunities within the City of Toronto and innovative ways TDSA agencies are providing supportive housing models to their clients.

- 46 people were in attendance with representation from 18 different agencies/organizations including the City of Toronto's Affordable Housing Office and Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS)
- 100% of the attendees said they would attend another housing forum if one was held in the future

Socially Inclusive Housing Design Session with Build Toronto (May 2017)

In partnership with BUILD Toronto, Kehilla Residential Programme and PooranLaw, the TDSA Housing Sub-Committee hosted a half day session 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 representatives
- The outcome of the housing design session resulted in the creation of 4 working groups looking at developing more socially inclusive housing designs (Online Guide; Inclusive Design; Planning, Policy & Legislation; Innovative Funding & Financial Frameworks)

TDSA Housing Brochure: Key Issues Affecting our Sector (September 2017)

- TDSA developed a brochure specifically focused on people with a developmental disability and their need for affordable housing
- Meant to be an outreach tool to inform about the issue and what barriers currently exist for people with a developmental disability

TSDA Website made Accessible to the Public (November 2017)

- Launched the public site of tdsa.ca with housing-related information and resources
- All relevant TDSA Housing Sub-Committee documentation can be viewed and downloaded through the website
- Website continues to be updated with relevant housing related information

Geo Mapping of Developmental Services Sector Housing Services & Supports (November 2017)

- 26 Developmental Services agencies in Toronto and the GTA provided housing data of various locations and types of housing services they provide (residential, treatment, respite etc.) across the city
- These locations were mapped and can be used as a tool to inform agencies of existing or potential neighbourhood supports when contemplating new developments

TDSA Second Housing Forum (November 2017)

The TDSA Housing Sub-Committee hosted its second Housing Forum, with speakers and representation from various organizations and levels of government. The day included breakout sessions exploring potential solutions to current housing challenges.

- 83+ attendees including Developmental Services agencies in Toronto, family members and representatives from Housing Task Force, Developmental Services Ontario – Toronto Region (DSOTR), MCSS and MOH

Summary of Housing Forum Presentations

Below is a summary of the speakers and presentations that took place during the Housing Forum. A copy of the presentations are available on the TDSA website at www.tdsa.ca and can be downloaded for personal reference.

Christine Kuepfer – Director, Program Policy Implementation, MCSS

Christine provided opening remarks on behalf of Rupert Gordon, the Assistant Deputy Minister for Community and Developmental Services of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Christine recognized the importance of having access to affordable housing for people with a developmental disability and commended the work that the TDSA has been doing to put the specific needs of this population on the map.

Art Mathews - Salvation Army Broadview Village: Future Residential Mapping

Art Mathews is the Executive Director of Salvation Army Broadview Village. Art examined the current waitlist for affordable housing concerning people with a developmental disability, and touched upon 20 year projections for how this number will continue to increase. The needs of the population will become more complex as we are now living longer, dealing with complex medical and health related issues that require intensive supports as well as facing a competitive housing market. Art highlighted some positive changes that are being implemented such as the Multi Year Residential Plan and discussions between the MCSS and Ministry of Housing.

It only gets worse....

Bryan Keshen - Reena: Intentional Community Consortium Model

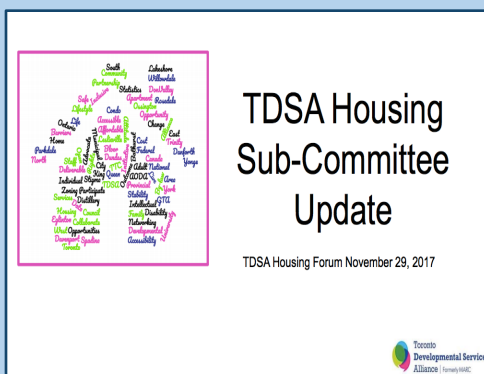
Bryan Keshen is president and CEO of Reena. Reena has created the Intentional Community Consortium (ICC) with other agencies across Ontario to pilot a series of affordable housing projects, which will result in the creation of hundreds of housing units designed for individuals with a developmental disability. Bryan's presentation elaborated on the current barriers faced by agencies trying to access funding and capital to build affordable housing for people with a developmental disability, and the advocacy work the ICC is doing on provincial and federal levels to challenge these barriers.

Frances MacNeil - Community Living Toronto: TDSA Housing Sub-Committee Update

Frances MacNeil is a Regional Executive Director at Community Living Toronto. Frances' presentation focused on sharing the work being done by the TDSA Housing Sub-Committee. Frances reiterated how Housing Forums allow our sector to stand as a united front on the issue of affordable and supportive housing and ensures agencies are informed about current opportunities to get involved and positively impact the housing situation for those with a developmental disability. This presentation also previewed the geo-map tool of housing services provided by Developmental Services agencies across Toronto as well as provided a brief introduction to how to access and utilize the TDSA website.

Michael Bach – Institutes for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society (IRIS): My Home My Community

Michael Bach is the Managing Director for IRIS as well as Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Association for Community Living. Michael presented 'My Home, My Community' (MHMC) which is a national initiative for affordable housing and inclusive community for people with a developmental disability. MHMC provides a framework to leverage personal and community assets and outmoded housing and support options. The program objectives are focused on increasing access to affordable housing, leveraging group home housing stock and capital, growing social infrastructure and developing policy solutions. Michael explored various development pathways and strategies aimed at helping to facilitate these program objectives.



Michele McMaster – Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation: Ontario Affordable Housing Centre & National Housing Strategy Overview

Michele McMaster is currently the Acting Manager of the Ontario Affordable Housing Centre, at Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Michele provided an overview of the Ontario Affordable Housing Centre, which provides personalized support, delivers federal investments and offers a wealth of tools and resources. There are various funding options for agencies creating affordable housing opportunities, such as the Affordable Rental Innovation Fund or access to Seed Funding. Michele also highlighted details from the newly released National Housing Strategy (NHS). An aspect of the NHS is the \$15.9 Billion National Housing Co-Investment Fund, where one of the outcomes is to provide at least 2,400 new affordable units specifically for people with a developmental disability.



Stephanie Malcher - Shelter Support and Housing Administration: Home for Good Toronto

Stephanie is a Policy Development Officer in the Strategic Policy and Service Planning team at Shelter Support and Housing Administration. Stephanie spoke about Home for Good Toronto, a provincial funding program contributing over \$90 million dollars towards Housing with Supports over the next 3 years. Home for Good funding will build on and leverage existing successful, evidence based approaches in place in Toronto, and will leverage opportunities through existing successful initiatives for the housing and homeless service system. Next steps for the program include releasing a Request for Proposal involving an “open call for ideas” encouraging funding for innovative agency solutions.



Housing Forum Discussion Outcomes

Following the Housing Forum presentations, small groups engaged in conversation about current housing challenges and discussed potential solutions specific to people with a developmental disability. This allowed the opportunity for attendees from various backgrounds to share their knowledge, concerns and personal experiences navigating the affordable and supportive housing systems within Toronto and the GTA.

Emerging from these conversations came recognition that people were quick to identify challenges in regards to housing for people with a developmental disability. The current landscape of solutions in place to mitigate these challenges were more difficult to identify, and tend to depend on personal experience engaging with housing opportunities within the sector. Despite the current barriers that make it difficult to access affordable and supportive housing for people with a developmental disability, these small groups identified various pathways to move towards more effective solutions.

The next few pages provide a summary of the outcome of the conversations that were had during the Housing Forum Discussion.

Challenges

Conversation around the challenges for people with a developmental disability in terms of housing was able to be examined from three categories: access, funding/cost and Developmental Services sector-specific challenges.

Access

The need for affordable housing and the provision of a variety of appropriate and individualized supports for people with a developmental disability go hand in hand. This population requires both in order to be able to live successfully within their communities. Therefore, they cannot access affordable housing through the channels that are currently being offered. This creates increased competition for desirable and suitable housing units, which in turn produces a long waitlist for housing. Individuals that are offered housing have limited choice for what type of housing they can access, they also have limited say in the location and time frame to access these housing opportunities.

Furthermore, the challenges continue once a person has accessed appropriate housing. There is heightened eviction potential due to people with a developmental disability often not having landlord references since they have not lived on their own previously, or have issues with credit checks due to receiving a limited income. This creates additional barriers accessing housing, and individuals often face discrimination as a result.

Funding/Cost

The issue of affordable housing is largely based on income levels. Many people with a developmental disability rely on Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) as their main source of income. The maximum monthly payment is approximately \$1,110 or \$13,320 a year, which puts them well below the income levels considered by the City of Toronto. Of this monthly amount, ODSP currently allots approximately \$489 to be spent on rent, therefore individuals cannot afford market rent. Current ODSP regulations exempt gifts and payments made to ODSP recipients up to \$10,000 every 12 months for all non-disability related expenditures. If family members can afford to help their loved ones cover the remaining cost of rent, the total amount individuals can spend on rent in one month is approximately \$1,322. According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the 2017 Average Market Rent (AMR) for a 1-bedroom apartment in the city of Toronto was \$1,137.

Developmental Services Sector-Specific Challenges

Individuals

People with a developmental disability often lack education around housing options due to a scattered navigation system, creating inconsistent and confusing messages about how and where to obtain affordable housing. Individuals will likely have fears about moving out of the family home into more independent living situations, but may not receive adequate time to address these fears due to the timing of housing opportunities and the coordination of access to supports.

Individuals moving into independent living situations desire community acceptance and welcoming, however often face high levels of discrimination and are vulnerable to exploitation. Condominium and affordable housing boards/groups are often resistant to including people with a developmental disability in their buildings as there is still much stigma associated with persons with a developmental disability.

Lastly, even if families have access to housing for the individual with a developmental disability, they remain on long waitlists for access to supports. Therefore, many families have to reach a crisis point to be prioritized for supports, to be able to utilize their housing.

Developmental Services Sector-Specific Challenges

Agencies

Developmental Services agencies face unique challenges when trying to provide housing for the individuals they support. For example, the current building codes hold supportive housing for individuals with a developmental disability to a higher standard compared to the typical tenant. There is an expectation that supportive housing for groups of individuals with a developmental disability must meet “B3 codes”, whether or not they have mobility issues. Yet, this building standard is not a requirement for the general public, who may also be managing supports for their various levels of mobility or cognitive functioning. These expectations are being met without cost compensation or incentives, creating increased barriers to housing.

Additionally, RFPs for affordable housing typically include stipulations that 3-bedroom units are usually reserved for families which limit full occupancy for persons with a developmental disability who often find these units more affordable given their limited income. Having access to these units would aid in making housing more affordable to individuals and their families who do not have the financial resources to access 1- or 2-bedroom units. As well, access to varied unit sizes within a typical apartment building would enable agencies to share and cluster supports for those who need it most. This can be achieved while providing opportunities for independence, community inclusion and skills building for others who are transitioning from their family homes or previous living situations that did not meet their growing needs (either for greater independence or support).

As people with a developmental disability age, their needs and physical abilities will also change. Many individuals will require alterations to their living environments to adjust to their changing physical and medical needs. This poses a challenge due to the aging of the infrastructure where many people currently reside, as many homes are not able to accommodate these changes. Due to the lack of housing options, this often results in individuals having to live in environments that may be risky, unsafe or high-priced.

Current Landscape

Dialogue from the Housing Forum allowed the opportunity for attendees to share knowledge and information about current models or solutions in place that address the housing challenges being discussed. Perspectives from different agencies, organizations and parents of adult children with a developmental disability were considered. These housing solutions ranged from what families were doing to access housing to how the government is presently addressing the need for affordable housing.

Families

Families have needed to be creative in addressing the need for housing for their adult child with a developmental disability. Many families feel they cannot wait any longer to receive residential funding, as many have spent years on the waitlist. Families have been mobilizing on their own and self-managing creative solutions that ensure their adult child has a chance to live independently and feel part of a community. For example, families have been connecting with other families in similar situations and arranging to share a house for their adult children in order to combine costs and supports. Families who may not have these resources are renovating their homes to accommodate their adult children, such as turning their garage into a one-bedroom apartment.

Families have also “swapped” living arrangements for their adult children so they experience living away from their parents while also continuing to be supported. Therefore, instead of parents having their own son/daughter living in their basement apartment, they swap with another family in the same situation to give their child more independence.

Independent facilitators have also been engaging with families as an alternative way to pursue residential options and ensuring the voice of the individual is being heard. Furthermore, families have worked at creating their own social networks and tight-knit social support circles to share knowledge and resources with one another. These options are creating natural networking opportunities which allow individuals with a developmental disability to establish relationships and have choice in connecting with potential housemates.

Agencies

Agencies have also needed to find innovative ways to address the demand for affordable and supportive housing for the individuals they serve. Many Developmental Services agencies have focused on engaging in partnerships with housing developers and property managers to arrange for units in apartments and condos to be allocated for people with a developmental disability. Having a few units located in the same building allows for a clustered support model, where individuals can share their supports, and still be able to develop a sense of community with the other apartment tenants.

Similar to families creating their own networks to share resources, the TDSA has set up a public website to share information related to housing. Developmental Services agencies have also partnered with agencies from other sectors (such as the mental health sector) on housing projects to secure units that provide more intensive supports to broader populations. Additionally, recognizing that housing is a prevalent issue, many agencies have developed committees or specific roles within their organizations dedicated to navigating the complex housing system and helping to access any appropriate funding.

Government

All levels of government have recognized that everyone needs housing that is safe and affordable. The federal government recently released the National Housing Strategy, with dedicated funds to provide at least 2,400 new affordable units for people with a developmental disability. Regarding funding for housing, specific to people with a developmental disability, the Developmental Services Housing Task Force has funded numerous community-based projects aimed at creating inclusive and cost-effective housing solutions for adults with a developmental disability. The various projects and locations throughout the province is listed on their website. In Toronto, the City will be receiving \$90 million over three years through the Home for Good initiative, as was discussed in one of the Housing Forum presentations. The intention is to invest in local, innovative approaches to get people experiencing chronic homelessness into housing and provide them with the support to remain successfully housed.

Moving Towards Effective Solutions

The final aspect of the discussions at the Housing Forum involved small groups identifying potential ways to access more affordable housing opportunities to meet the varying needs of people with a developmental disability. This dialogue stemmed from identifying gaps within the system, and changes that need to be made in order to make affordable housing a more reasonable option.

Advocacy and Promotion

A main challenge in obtaining housing for people with a developmental disability includes various systemic barriers that do not take into consideration the unique needs of these individuals. Therefore, an important part of creating effective solutions must contain aspects of advocacy. More advocacy would serve to promote the needs of people with a developmental disability and ensure they are being considered at all levels of government, as well by the general public.

Ideas that were discussed which would benefit from further advocacy:

- Advocate that future affordable housing Request for Proposal's (RFP) will have an incentive if developers partner with agencies to connect affordable and supportive housing together
- Promote that 5% of new affordable housing be designated specifically for people with a developmental disability
- More advocacy around the impact that by-laws have on accessing buildings and future developments, in order to be more considerate to the needs of people with a developmental disability.

Knowledge Sharing

It was noted during the Housing Forum that a major barrier for families and agencies is being aware of current opportunities to access housing. Families stated they often felt out of the loop about housing and/or funding opportunities if they were not connected to an agency. Furthermore, agencies could speak to housing opportunities that they were attached to, but had a difficult time knowing what else was available. Sharing knowledge and information with one another, across all levels and sectors, would allow for more transparency and less confusion around accessing housing opportunities.

Ideas discussed of what knowledge sharing could look like:

- Continue to have housing forums to create dialogue and stay focused on goals
- Develop a shared database or website where people could access and post information about relevant housing opportunities for our sector. Agencies can share information with one another as well as families who are not connected to an agency can access affordable housing opportunities
- Cross sector collaboration, particularly with various ministries (MCSS, MCYS, Ministry of Housing) to create shared access to opportunities

Recommendations

Evolving from the Housing Forum discussions was an understanding that families and agencies face varying obstacles and challenges that impact accessing affordable housing options for people with a developmental disability. The TDSA examined key issues resulting from the discussion and have compiled a list of recommendations/ideas that would further assist the efforts focused on creating more affordable housing opportunities.

1. Individuals and families to have more options for support

While families appreciate the work of TDSA to access and share information about more affordable housing opportunities, they don't see an existing pathway within Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) for them to be aware of and have access to such housing opportunities available through Developmental Services agencies.

- Create a pathway for individuals and families not connected with an agency to connect with housing opportunities, such as utilizing the Housing Navigator positions across the DSOs to act as liaisons for families that have accessed alternative supports and are looking for affordable housing to connect with new housing opportunities.
- Diversify funding for families who create their own housing opportunities so they have supports, not just the highest priority cases. For example, 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.

2. Allow for more realistically affordable options

Exempting gifts and payments made to ODSP recipients up to \$10,000 every 12 months 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.

- 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 struggling to find 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.

3. Create more capital funding 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.

- Continue to support the message of 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.
- MCSS to partner with Developmental Services 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 Developmental Services 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. Have more committed operating funds to help secure future housing opportunities

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 their ability to ensure rental payments, inhibiting agency ability to secure new prospects.

- Align Multi Year Residential Planning funding opportunities when Developmental Services agencies have successfully secured future housing (as Developmental Services agencies do not have the resources to support more people without additional funding).
- Commit operating funds in the near term (now), so that Developmental Services 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.

