



# 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

*This report was made possible by a grant  
from the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council*

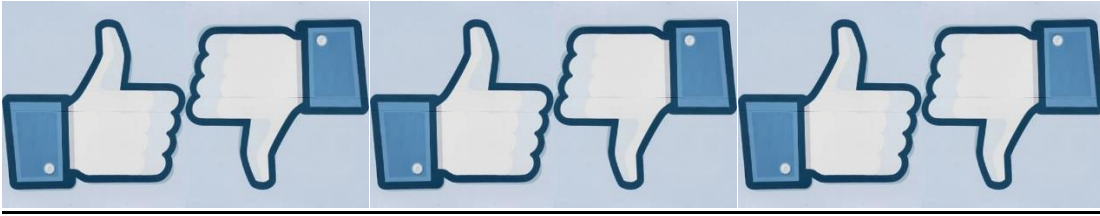
## Demographics and Current Housing

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



*This report was made possible by a grant  
from the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council*



## 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



*This report was made possible by a grant  
from the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council*



## 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



*This report was made possible by a grant  
from the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council*



## 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, PADDCC 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)

*This report was made possible by a grant  
from the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council*