

Residential Services for Persons with an Intellectual Disability

The Issue:

Residential Services for persons with an intellectual disability are reportedly becoming more restrictive and many may no longer meet the desired definition of home.

Current status:

- Article 19 of the ***Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*** recognizes the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community, with the freedom to choose and control their lives.
- Many Cooperative Apartments are becoming increasingly restrictive and appear to operate more like the group homes that were closed many years ago.
- Reportedly, individuals living there have restricted social contact. (i.e. their advocate is not allowed to support a person to go for a coffee or to invite them to their homes purely on the basis of where they live.)
- Alternate Family Care Homes, though not appropriate for all, provide a good option for many who wish to stay with others in the community when they can no longer remain at home. Many of these homes have provided stable supportive living arrangements for those moving back to their communities from institutional placements.
- It is understood that such homes are becoming harder to recruit and support.
- Individualized Living Arrangements (ILA'S) are available throughout the province to meet the needs of some who have been approved and supported to live there.
- The Paid Family Caregiving Option, under the Provincial Home Support Program, is a fairly new option for persons with a disability and their families. It provides more flexibility and reduces the administrative burden. The funding is provided through a version of individualized funding.
- It is necessary to identify other community options/homes for individuals with an intellectual disability to enable them to have choice and control when looking for a home.

Conclusion:

- The Cooperative Apartment Program as it was originally designed was a good program to help prepare individuals to experience full lives in the community. In a review of residential services it is necessary to compare the practice to the policy to determine if it is still being implemented as intended. If it no longer meets this standard it may be necessary to redesign the program to ensure that it focuses on choice and self-determination.
- The Alternate Family Care Home Program has worked well in supporting individuals with an intellectual disability over the past 25 years and it should be recognized for the value that it has provided and evaluated to determine if it can be used in the future to ensure stability for those who wish to continue in this setting.
- Individualized Living Arrangements and the Paid Family Caregiving Option also have merit for those who wish to avail of them.
- It is necessary however, to ensure that there is a ready supply of accessible and affordable homes available throughout the province to enable individuals with an intellectual disability to choose where and with whom they wish to reside.
- There is a need to explore other housing options that are being used throughout the country and internationally that may have merit for consideration in NL as it is essential to ensure that community based options remain available.

Recommendations:

- Inclusion Canada NL (ICNL, formerly known as NLACL) shall offer to participate in government's review of residential services and work collaboratively with all partners to ensure that all future services continue to be community focused. Individuals with an intellectual disability do not belong in institutions and need to have the ability to choose from various types of community options to meet their housing needs, with supports if required.

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