

Position Statement

## **Access to Housing for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

Plain Language Version

### **Introduction**

Inclusion BC is a group of members who work to support the rights and inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We follow the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This agreement says people with disabilities have the same right as everyone else to choose where they live, to live on their own, and to be part of their community.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have often been treated unfairly. Government rules and poor treatment in society have caused harm for many years. Our position statement aims to challenge racist<sup>1</sup>, ableist<sup>2</sup>, ageist<sup>3</sup>, colonial<sup>4</sup> and other unfair ideas about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our goal is to support the inclusion of everyone in the community, no matter a person's:

- finances,
- background,
- culture,
- religion,
- relationship status,
- sex, gender identity, or gender expression,
- sexual orientation,
- age, or
- disability.

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<sup>1</sup> Racist – discriminatory ideas against a person or group of people because they belong to a particular racial or ethnic group.

<sup>2</sup> Ableist – discriminatory ideas against people with disabilities.

<sup>3</sup> Ageist – discriminatory ideas against people because of their age.

<sup>4</sup> Colonial – ideas, laws, and actions forced on one group of people by another.

We recognize and support:

- Indigenous rights and titles across British Columbia
- The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- The 94 Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- The B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

## Position Statement

Inclusion BC believes that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the right to choose where and how they live. There should be many housing options to meet people's needs throughout their lives. Housing should be a choice. It should not be limited by disability or how much money someone has. Housing should help people feel independent, respected, and part of their community.

Inclusive housing means:

- **Fewer barriers in daily life:** Homes are safe and meet people's health and support needs.
- **Choice in where to live:** People choose their home and live in regular neighbourhoods, not grouped by disability or income.
- **Being part of the community:** People can join in social, work, and community activities.
- **Being valued:** People are respected and seen as important members of their community.
- **Living independently:** People have the support they need to live as independently as possible.

Inclusive housing is not just about having a place to live. It helps people have control of their lives. It also allows for connection with others and full participation in different areas of life.

Inclusive housing must respect Indigenous self-determination. This means governments must work with Indigenous people and communities. Indigenous voices and experiences should guide decisions that affect them.

All levels of government must make sure people can find safe, affordable, and inclusive housing. This includes removing barriers and providing the supports people need to be fully included in their communities.

In this statement, we explain the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We share calls to action to help make these rights real.

To go straight to the calls to action, [click here](#).

## Background

In the past, many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in British Columbia were taken from their families and placed in large institutions. For example, the Woodlands School in New Westminster. Many people were isolated, had little control over their lives, and experienced neglect or abuse. They were denied basic rights, such as living with family, attending school, and being part of their community.

Starting in the 1970s, people with disabilities, families, and allies advocated for change. This led to a shift toward community living, where people live in their own homes with support. The closing of institutions was an important step toward human rights, inclusion, and dignity.

Today, challenges remain like not enough housing and support. There are still housing models being used that keep people with disabilities isolated. The past reminds us why it is important to keep building safe, inclusive housing options where people have choice and control.

## Rights of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Everyone has the right to safe and affordable housing. Housing is a human right, not a special benefit. This idea is supported by BC and Canadian laws and agreements Canada has signed. For example, the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), the [BC Human Rights Code](#), and [laws that protect Indigenous rights](#).

A rights-based approach means governments and housing systems must remove barriers and stop discrimination. People should be able to choose where and how they live. This includes people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and others who may face barriers.

Inclusive housing should:

- support independence and choice,
- be easy to access and use,
- respect culture and identity,
- allow people to participate in their community, and
- allow people to be part of regular neighbourhoods, not separated or isolated.

In Canada, the [National Housing Strategy Act](#) says housing is a human right. Governments must make sure housing is affordable, accessible, and safe for everyone.

Canada has a Federal Housing Advocate. This role helps protect the right to housing and makes sure governments take action. The Federal Housing Advocate says steps must be taken now to make sure people with disabilities have housing that is:

- safe,
- accessible,
- affordable,
- in good condition, and
- respectful of culture.

Governments should make rules to lower housing costs. This includes rent limits and building more affordable housing. These decisions should be made with people with disabilities and their advocates so that their experiences and perspectives are understood.

## Housing Preferences and Barriers

Housing is considered affordable if it costs no more than 30% of a person's income. Many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities earn less than \$20,000 a year. This means affordable rent would be about \$500 a month. However, housing in BC costs much more than this, making it very hard for people with disabilities to find a home.

Some people face even more challenges. For example, Indigenous people with disabilities often have to leave their communities to find accessible housing.

A [report](#) found that 60% of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in BC want to live in their own homes with the supports they need. This shows the need for more flexible housing options.

The number of people needing support is growing. Community Living BC expects this number to be more than double over 20 years. This includes older adults and people moving out of family homes. However, people with disabilities are not included in the government housing plans. There are barriers in the systems that make it harder for people with disabilities to get housing. For example:

- People with disabilities are at a higher risk of experiencing homelessness.
- People with disabilities live with family because there are no other options.
- There is not enough support for families.

- There are not enough in-home supports to live more independently.
- Rents that are too high.
- Not enough low-cost housing is available
- People with disabilities are discriminated against when trying to rent a place.

Because of these challenges, it can be very hard for people to find inclusive housing.

## False Choice

People who contact Inclusion BC want to feel safe, supported, and included. Often, people have been told that group homes or large care settings are their only option. Living in these settings is often not a real choice. It happens because there are not enough other housing options.

Housing and disability supports should be separate as much as possible, including how they are organized and paid for. When they are tied together, people have less control over their lives. This is what happens in institutional models like large group homes. These kinds of settings can limit people's rights. They may provide care, but they do not always feel like a real home.

In BC, many people use home sharing. This means living with a host family. Home sharing can work well for some people. But at the same time, home sharing can:

- limit choice,
- force people to live in ways that do not match what they want,
- hide bigger problems in the system,
- put pressure on a small group of home share providers,
- cause unreliable quality of support, and
- lead to caregiver burnout.

Some people have more complex needs. This means people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who experience mental health or substance use challenges. Many housing options and disability supports do not meet their needs. This can increase the risk of experiencing homelessness or other difficulties.

We talk about ways to address these issues in the [Position Statement on Access to Disability Supports and Services for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#).

People need more choices. This includes living on their own with support, cooperative housing models,<sup>5</sup> and other community options. More housing options support choice, dignity, and inclusion.

## Responsibilities of Different Levels of Government

The municipal, provincial, and federal governments all have a role in making sure people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can find safe, affordable, and inclusive housing.

### Municipal Governments

Without support and understanding from local governments, inclusive housing is not often included in planning and building decisions. Cities and towns help decide what kinds of housing get built and where.

Municipal (local) governments should:

- Include a fair and inclusive definition of “housing affordability” in Local Housing Plans.
- Support affordable and accessible homes for everyone.
- Work with the people and groups that build housing to expand housing options.
- Track whether enough affordable homes are being built.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are more likely to live in poverty. They need housing that is fair, inclusive, and supports their independence and belonging in the community.

### Provincial Government

In 2017, Inclusion BC and Community Living BC worked together to address the need for inclusive housing. The [report](#) showed the importance of:

- Providing information and resources,
- People with disabilities being seen and included,
- Having affordable housing and income support, and
- Designing homes to be inclusive.

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<sup>5</sup> Cooperative housing is when a group of people get together to create an association and work together to provide safe, secure, and affordable homes for their members.

Even though progress has been made, not enough housing options have been developed. Many people eligible for Community Living BC-funded services still live with family. This is because people cannot afford other housing options or don't have the disability supports they need to live more independently.

To respect the right to housing, the provincial government should:

- Create clear ways for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to find and use all the housing options in the [provincial housing strategy](#).
- Create more housing options than group homes and shared living.
- Help people rent or buy their own homes.
- Make sure housing and disability supports work together.
- Respect people's right to have choice and control over where they live.

## Federal Government

Access to inclusive housing is a basic human right for all Canadians. The federal government too often allows housing to separate people with disabilities from their communities.

Inclusive housing means that people with disabilities can live in regular neighbourhoods with safe, affordable homes and can get the supports they need to be part of community life.

The National Housing Strategy and related Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation programs should use this definition:

"Inclusive housing means safe, affordable, accessible homes where people with disabilities can live by choice, in dispersed mixed-income neighbourhoods, with the supports they need to participate fully in community life."

The federal government must:

- Stop funding housing that separates people with disabilities from the community.
- Invest in inclusive, community-based housing.
- Create a national plan to help people move out of institutions and into homes of their choice.
- Work with provinces and municipalities to remove barriers to inclusive housing.

Many people with disabilities still live in poverty, even with provincial and federal disability benefits. Not having enough money makes it much harder to find safe and affordable housing. We look at this issue more in the [Position Statement on Income Security for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#).

## Calls to Action

Inclusion BC asks all levels of government to make sure people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can live in safe, affordable, and inclusive homes in their communities. This work should respect human rights and follow the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### Municipal Governments

Local governments should create housing plans that:

- Use an inclusive definition of 'housing affordability.' This means considering the needs of people with low and middle incomes.
- Set a target number and track how many affordable homes are being built.
- Include the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in housing plans.
- Work with housing non-profits and others to expand housing options.
- Support Indigenous Nations and Indigenous organizations to lead housing planning and decision-making in their communities.

### Provincial Government

The Province of BC should clearly define inclusive housing in its [housing strategy](#) and housing programs. The province should:

- Work with municipal and federal governments to create more inclusive and culturally safe housing options.
- Make sure housing needs and disability supports work together.
- Increase the number of affordable housing choices and set clear goals.
- Understand the housing and affordability needs for people with disabilities and their families, and act on them.
- Set a goal to help people eligible for Community Living BC move out of their parents' home into a home of their own with the support they need.
- Support Indigenous Nations and Indigenous organizations to lead housing planning in their communities.

## Government of Canada

The federal government should clearly define inclusive housing in the [National Housing Strategy](#) and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation programs. The federal government should:

- Stop funding housing that separates people with disabilities from the community.
- Create a national plan to help people move from institutions into homes in the community.
- Make sure federal housing money is only used for inclusive housing.

## Final Message

Inclusion BC believes people with intellectual and developmental disabilities belong in the community. This means in homes of their own choosing, with the supports they need to live safe, meaningful, and independent lives.

Housing policies should not separate people from their communities. Instead, they should focus on human rights, fairness, and inclusion for everyone.