

A Spectrum of Possibility: Decreasing Barriers and Increasing Options in
Housing for Adults with Autism
Housing Roundtable Follow Up and Action Items
May, 2013

Twenty-five experts from across the country joined a roundtable discussion on “*A Spectrum of Possibilities: Decreasing Barriers and Increasing Options*” sponsored by Madison House Autism Foundation and Purple Cherry Architects. Housing and disability experts, parents, and non-profit leaders shared highlights of emerging innovative housing concepts and flourishing existing models. They also identified barriers limiting public sector and private enterprise initiatives working to meet the demand for housing for the half million adults with autism coming of age within the next few years. Attendees and others interested in improving opportunities for adults with autism and other intellectual disabilities are encouraged to join a committee or help support these initiatives.

1. Barrier: Narrow Definition of “community” proposed by CMS will dramatically limit new initiatives and disqualify many successful existing housing models.

Group Leaders: Ian Paregol, Executive Director CSAAC; and Mark Olson, President and CEO LTO Ventures

Working Group: Advocacy: Calls to Action

Action: Attendees and constituents are encouraged to send a thank you letter to Congressman Thompson in response to his letter to CMS outlining the repercussions of narrowly defining “community.”

Action: Constituents are asked to use Congressman Thompson’s letter as a sample and contact other members of Congress, requesting that they send their own letter to CMS regarding definition of community and emphasis on choice.

2. Barrier: Asset limit creates forced poverty

Group Leaders: Ian Paregol, Executive Director CSAAC; and Mark Olson, President and CEO LTO Ventures

Working Group: Eliminating Forced Policy and Raising Asset Limits

Action: Launch a letter-writing campaign to Congress to raise the asset limit to at least ***Minimum Poverty Level***.

Action: Engage all others working on this issue; articulate the specific consequences of the \$2,000 asset limit; gather stories from those affected.

3. Barrier: Current policy restricts Special Needs Trusts from holding certain mortgages for beneficiaries; policy also disqualifies some forms of group housing models from being eligible for FHA lending. Families of potential residents are ineligible for FHA and similar lending due to outmoded language/policy.

Group Leader: Jacquie Doty

Working Group: Access to Individual Housing Financing Options

Action: Engage and educate Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac regarding policy restrictions

4. Barrier: Discriminatory zoning restrictions can be enacted to limit proximity of housing units with the goal of restricting housing units within specific communities . Collect, educate and be aware of scattered-site regulations with the goal to eventually eliminate these types of discriminating restrictions

Working group: Development and Zoning Barriers/Solutions

Action: Share specific barriers, engage zoning authorities and pro bono legal services.

5. Barrier: Investigate Medicaid state-planned services/ GAFC and develop models that can be used across the states.

Group Leaders: Arnie Dordick, Executive Director Langton Green, inc. and Catherine Boyle, President, Autism Housing Pathways

Working Group: Using State Planned Services for Creating Home Options

Action: Lead and moderate national discussion on the challenges of the existing model. Identify best existing models and work to develop strategy to share plans working at state level.

6. Opportunity: Share Policy Best Practices and Best Waivers from around the country and raise the bar.

Group Leaders: Arnie Dordick, Executive Director Langton Green, inc. and Catherine Boyle, President, Autism Housing Pathways

Working Group: Policy Best Practices

Action: Review 2011 Policy Research Brief on national trends of HCBS serving those on the spectrum including the variety of waivers, and a presentation about lessons learned from the implementation of 2 autism waivers in PA.

Action: Create Discussion Forum on AHN for state-by-state feedback and invite others to share their experience using autism waivers.

7. Opportunity: Redefining Community and the Olmstead Decision. Create broad “community” definitions for adoption in policies and legislation in order to avoid further confusion in interpretation by states and the creation of unintended barriers to innovation and progress in meeting the housing challenge for autistic and intellectually disabled adults.

Group Leaders: John Hussman, President, Hussman Investment Trust; Desiree Kameka, Director of Community Education & Advocacy, Madison House Autism Foundation; Mark Olson, President and CEO LTO Ventures; Saanen Kerson, Associate Director, Vine Village; & Cathy Cherry, Principal/Owner Purple Cherry Architects

Working Group: Redefining Community

Action: Review existing documents: ‘*Characteristics of Community*’ which includes some of the feedback from the Round Table and “*Choice V. Olmstead*”, an op-ed written by Mark Olson. Continue research and develop tactical plan to redefine the term “community” as interpreted by the Olmstead Act. Current

definition mandates a level of government-supported care regardless of individual need that makes government-supported housing economically impossible.

8. Opportunity: Expand IDA (Individual Development Account) eligibility to include and accommodate families with special needs children

Group Leader: Catherine Boyle, President, Autism Housing Pathways

Working group: Policy Change: IDA Eligibility Requirements

Action: Explore other asset building tools that need to be assessed

Action: Develop strategy, economic impact, data and stories to move this forward

9. Opportunity: Explore, engage and implement strategies that actively involve public, private and nonprofit sectors working together through economic, community, and government incentives.

Project Leaders: Jeff Deutsch, Founder A SPLINT; Ian Paregol, Executive Director CSAAC; and Mark Olson, President and CEO LTO Ventures

Working Group: Social Enterprises and Employment

Housing Action: Create Enterprise Zones for tax incentives and reinvestment into projects

Housing Action: Create funding support for leading collaborative models such as Indigo Trails (MHAF) and LTO Ventures

Employment Action: Develop tax and other incentives for an employer to hire individuals with autism and other disabilities, e.g, these individuals have their own benefits Ex: Enact contract and procurement incentives similar to those offered to women and minority-owned business.

Employment Action: Build relationship with other small business enterprises to obtain government contracts

Employment Action: Monitor RFP activity to see what goods and services are purchased regularly

Request details on goals per organizations

Info available online or via FOIA request (Freedom of Information Act)

Employment Action: Create Social Enterprises and On-Site Employment discussion group; share collaborative documents , 'Online Stores of Products Made by People with I/DD and Autism', 'Small Businesses Created for Employing Autistic Adults and others with I/DD'

Employment Action: Forum to share tips for Federal/State procurement opportunities

Each participant to share 2 incentives for small businesses to hire autistics

10. Opportunity: Share success stories and recognize innovators – living and work models, financial, housing, etc. to educate government and state officials that good things are happening and that solutions are possible. Unite and support each other.

Group Leaders: All participants; Desiree Kameka, *Director of Community Education & Advocacy* & Adrienne McBride, Senior Director, Madison House Autism Foundation

Working Group: All

Action: Investigate websites that benefit individuals with autism and other disabilities & advertises related organizations ... share and support each other

Action: Identify, post and share top most helpful resources; share others' innovations; support cross- efforts; submit blog postings encouraging support of individual initiatives, i.e. buy roses grown and sold by autistics

(<http://www.rosesforautism.com/>) and support Rising Tides carwash, etc.