



HOUSING RESEARCH REPORT

Literature Reviews on Housing Needs: Developmental Disabilities, 2019

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Literature Reviews on Housing Needs

People with Developmental Disabilities

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Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Executive Summary

Developmental disabilities include a range of conditions that can affect cognitive functioning, intellectual development, emotional development, and/or physical functioning. As the nature of developmental disabilities varies, so do the specific needs of those with these disabilities. Nevertheless, the literature identifies housing-related needs, challenges, and considerations that are commonly-held among this population, as well as some potential solutions for meeting these needs.

Housing needs

Key points:

- ▶ As developmental disabilities frequently co-occur with other disabilities—including physical disabilities—accessible housing features may be required.
- ▶ Those with developmental disabilities can be successfully housed in individualized accommodations, group homes, or shared-living arrangements with appropriate, individualized supports in place.
- ▶ As people with developmental disabilities can face challenges in learning, communicating, forming relationships with others, and adapting to dominant behavioural norms, it is essential that a housing strategy for this population include access to programs and services to address these challenges — including, as needed, support for completion of daily activities, as well as communication, behavioural, vocational, and personal development supports
- ▶ A successful housing strategy for this population must recognize the long-term (generally, life-long) nature of developmental disabilities to ensure that ongoing care needs are met, and housing stability is retained.
- ▶ While there are similarities in housing needs and challenges across the developmentally-disabled population, the literature provides some indication of housing design considerations that are important for those with particular types of developmental disability.

Challenges and barriers in accessing housing needs

Key points:

- ▶ Those with developmental disabilities can face diverse challenges related to learning, communicating and forming relationships with others, and adapting to dominant behavioural norms, which can affect their ability to meet their housing needs.
- ▶ Discrimination is a major challenge faced by those with developmental disabilities. In the past, inaccurate assumptions about the ability of this population to contribute to society and to live independently have resulted in an institutional housing model, which has not met their needs. Although, within Canada, people with developmental disabilities are no longer institutionalized, they may still be denied equal choice in the housing market due to discrimination.
- ▶ The ability of those with developmental disabilities to meet their housing needs can be affected by financial challenges, low rates of income assistance, and the limited availability of services and programs designed to support this population.

- ▶ Youth with developmental disabilities may experience unique housing challenges. They may face difficulties in transitioning from pediatric services and systems of care (health, housing) into adult service systems. In addition, due to long wait lists for funding for supportive housing, developmentally disabled youth may experience a gap in support once they reach adulthood.

Potential and proven solutions

Key points:

- ▶ Over the past few decades, there has been increasing recognition—both within Canada and internationally—that those with developmental disabilities should be afforded some choice and control over their housing and daily living, and they should not live in situations that isolate them from friends, family, or the broader community. This has led to a shift away from an institutional model of care toward a community-based model of care.
- ▶ Community-based housing options—ranging from individualized accommodations to group home or shared living arrangements—have been associated with positive outcomes for people with developmental disabilities, but only when accompanied by individualized planning that ensures that individuals are connected with the services and supports that they need to be successful in their living arrangement.
- ▶ Some studies have posited that a Housing First approach could apply to those with developmental disabilities, if the additional supports offered through Housing First are designed to meet the specific, individualized needs of this population.
- ▶ The literature provides evidence of a variety of Canadian governmental (federal, as well as provincial) and non-governmental housing initiatives, as well as international housing initiatives currently in place to address the housing issues faced by those with developmental disabilities.

Information gaps

The literature identifies that information about the prevalence of these disabilities among those in housing need is limited, as is information about the housing-related wants and needs of this population. These information gaps make it more difficult to serve this population. In addition, there is limited information about the extent to which the challenges faced by those with developmental disabilities intersect with challenges resulting from other vulnerabilities (gender, sexual orientation, race, newcomer or veteran status).

Résumé

Les déficiences développementales comprennent un éventail de conditions pouvant influencer sur le fonctionnement cognitif, le développement intellectuel, le développement émotionnel ou le fonctionnement physique. Comme les déficiences développementales sont de différentes natures, les besoins particuliers des personnes vivant avec ces incapacités varient également. Néanmoins, la documentation fait état des besoins, des défis et des considérations liés au logement qui sont courants parmi cette population, ainsi que de certaines solutions possibles pour répondre à ces besoins.

Besoins en matière de logement

Principaux points

- ▶ Comme les déficiences développementales coexistent souvent avec d'autres incapacités, y compris les déficiences physiques, des caractéristiques de logement accessibles peuvent être nécessaires.
- ▶ Les personnes ayant une déficience développementale peuvent être logées avec succès dans des logements individuels, des foyers de groupe ou des logements collectifs où l'on trouve des services de soutien appropriés et personnalisés.
- ▶ Comme les personnes ayant une déficience développementale peuvent avoir de la difficulté à apprendre, à communiquer, à établir des relations avec les autres et à s'adapter aux normes comportementales dominantes, il est essentiel qu'une stratégie de logement pour cette population comprenne l'accès à des programmes et à des services pour relever ces défis – y compris, au besoin, le soutien à la réalisation des activités quotidiennes, ainsi que des mesures de soutien à la communication, au comportement, à la formation professionnelle et au développement personnel.
- ▶ Une stratégie de logement efficace pour cette population doit tenir compte de la nature à long terme (en général, à vie) des déficiences développementales pour s'assurer que les besoins de soins continus sont satisfaits et que la stabilité du logement est maintenue.
- ▶ Bien qu'il y ait des similitudes entre les besoins et les défis en matière de logement des personnes ayant une déficience développementale, la documentation fournit certaines indications sur les facteurs de conception des logements qui sont importants pour les personnes ayant des types particuliers de déficience développementale.

Défis et obstacles à la réponse aux besoins en matière de logement

Principaux points

- ▶ Les personnes ayant une déficience développementale peuvent faire face à divers défis liés à l'apprentissage, à la communication et à l'établissement de relations avec les autres et à l'adaptation aux normes comportementales dominantes, ce qui peut nuire à leur capacité de répondre à leurs besoins en matière de logement.
- ▶ La discrimination est un défi majeur pour ces personnes. Dans le passé, des hypothèses inexactes sur la capacité de cette population à contribuer à la société et à vivre de façon autonome ont donné lieu à un modèle de logement institutionnel qui n'a pas répondu à ses besoins. Bien qu'au Canada les personnes ayant une déficience développementale ne soient plus institutionnalisées, elles pourraient tout de même se voir refuser l'égalité des choix sur le marché de l'habitation en raison de la discrimination.
- ▶ La capacité des personnes ayant une déficience développementale à répondre à leurs besoins en matière de logement peut être touchée par des difficultés financières, de faibles taux d'aide au revenu et la disponibilité limitée de services et de programmes conçus pour les soutenir.
- ▶ Les jeunes ayant une déficience développementale peuvent éprouver des difficultés particulières en matière de logement. Ils peuvent avoir de la difficulté à faire la transition entre les services et les systèmes de soins pédiatriques (santé, logement) et les systèmes de services pour adultes. De plus, en raison des longues listes d'attente pour obtenir du financement pour des logements avec services de soutien, les jeunes ayant une déficience

développementale pourraient ne pas obtenir le soutien nécessaire lorsqu'ils atteignent l'âge adulte.

Solutions possibles et éprouvées

Principaux points

- ▶ Au cours des dernières décennies, il a été de plus en plus reconnu, tant au Canada qu'à l'étranger, que les personnes ayant une déficience développementale devraient avoir un certain choix et un certain contrôle sur leur logement et sur leur vie quotidienne, et qu'elles ne devraient pas vivre dans des situations qui les isolent de leurs amis, de leur famille ou l'ensemble de la collectivité. Cela a entraîné un déplacement du modèle de soins institutionnel vers un modèle de soins communautaire.
- ▶ Les options de logement communautaire – allant des logements individuels aux foyers de groupe en passant par les logements collectifs – ont été associées à des résultats positifs pour les personnes ayant une déficience développementale, mais seulement lorsqu'elles sont accompagnées d'une planification personnalisée qui fait en sorte que les personnes ont accès aux services et au soutien dont elles ont besoin pour s'adapter à leurs modalités de logement.
- ▶ Selon certaines études, l'approche Logement d'abord pourrait s'appliquer aux personnes ayant une déficience développementale, à condition que les mesures de soutien supplémentaires offertes dans le cadre de cette approche soient conçues pour répondre aux besoins personnalisés de cette population.
- ▶ La documentation fournit des preuves de diverses initiatives de logement gouvernementales (fédérales et provinciales) et non gouvernementales au Canada, ainsi que des initiatives de logement internationales actuellement en place pour régler les problèmes de logement des personnes ayant une déficience développementale.

Lacunes en matière d'information

La documentation indique que l'information sur la proportion de personnes handicapées parmi les personnes ayant des besoins en matière de logement est limitée, de même que celle sur les désirs et les besoins en matière de logement de cette population. Ces lacunes en matière d'information rendent plus difficile le service à cette population. De plus, on dispose de peu d'information sur la mesure dans laquelle les défis auxquels font face les personnes ayant une déficience développementale recourent les défis découlant d'autres vulnérabilités (genre, orientation sexuelle, race, statut de nouvel arrivant ou d'ancien combattant).

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Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Methodology.....	1
1.2	Description of developmental disabilities for the purposes of this review.....	1
2.0	Identified housing needs.....	3
2.1	Needs and design considerations related to specific types of developmental disabilities.....	6
3.0	Challenges and barriers in accessing housing needs.....	8
4.0	Potential and proven solutions.....	10
	References.....	17

1.0 Introduction

The goal of Canada’s new National Housing Strategy (NHS) is to ensure that Canadians across the country have access to affordable housing that meets their needs. As such, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which is leading the NHS, requires additional information on the housing needs of the most vulnerable Canadians and the challenges that they experience in accessing housing. CMHC, therefore, required literature reviews to be conducted on the housing needs of vulnerable populations, which will inform NHS programs. This current literature review assesses the housing needs of people with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities.

1.1 Methodology

This literature review examines the housing-related needs and challenges and emerging solutions for people with developmental disabilities. A literature search was conducted of publicly available academic literature, government publications, grey literature, and media coverage. The searches focussed on Canada, but extended to international sources where relevant. The review covers the following key elements:

- ▶ identified housing needs (housing features, home supports, locational features, other needs specific to people with developmental disabilities) and the extent to which these needs are met/unmet
- ▶ challenges and barriers in accessing suitable housing
- ▶ intersectionality with other identities (e.g., race, gender, age, family status, indigeneity, health, location)
- ▶ potential and proven solutions for meeting housing needs

1.2 Description of developmental disabilities for the purposes of this review

People with developmental disabilities are a priority vulnerable group under Canada’s NHS. According to the NHS, people with developmental disabilities are characterized as having “significant limitations in both intellectual capacity and adaptive skills” (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 9).

Developmental disabilities are defined in the literature as long-term (often life-long) disorders diagnosed at birth or appearing before adulthood that can affect cognitive ability, intellectual development, emotional development, and/or physical functioning (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2016; Government of Canada, 2018; Tanudjaja, Arsenault, Mahmood, & Dubourdieu, 2018; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2018). While the broad definition of developmental disability includes both physical and intellectual disabilities, intellectual disabilities have a more specific definition. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines intellectual disability as a “significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information and to learn and apply new skills (impaired intelligence)”

which “results in a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning), and begins before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development.” The WHO definition points out that, in characterizing a condition as a disability, it is important to consider not only an individual’s health conditions or impairments, but also the extent to which environmental factors support full participation and inclusion in society (World Health Organization, 2019). Commonly-diagnosed developmental disabilities include Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, autism, and cerebral palsy. Developmental disabilities may also result from inadequate care during childhood which results in developmental delays and/or psychological problems (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2016; Government of Canada, 2018; Tanudjaja et al., 2018; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2018; World Health Organization, 2019).

This assignment involved searching for literature on housing-related needs and challenges specific to people with intellectual disabilities, as well as to those with developmental disabilities in a broader sense. In other words, both “developmental disabilities” and “intellectual disabilities” were used as search terms and, as such, both terms are used throughout this report, reflecting how the terms were used in the literature. While developmental disabilities comprise intellectual disabilities, these terms are not entirely interchangeable, as the definition of developmental disabilities is broader. Nevertheless, it has been argued that all those with developmental disabilities have similar needs in terms of housing, support, and treatment, and face similar challenges, such as stereotypes and stigmas (Tanudjaja et al., 2018).

Developmental disabilities in Canada and among those in core housing need

Statistics Canada’s most recent Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) reports that, as of 2017, roughly 1.1% of Canadians aged 15 and older (315,470 people) had been diagnosed with a developmental disability (Morris, Fawcett, Brisebois, & Hughes, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2018c).¹ CSD results have shown that, in comparison to the general population, people with developmental disabilities tend to have:

- ▶ lower levels of educational attainment;
- ▶ lower incomes; and
- ▶ a greater reliance on government transfers as a major source of income (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Moreover, CSD data and other sources indicate that gaps in educational attainment and income in comparison to the general population are greater for those with developmental disabilities than for those with other types of disability (Bizier, Fawcett, Gilbert, & Marshall, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2015, 2018c).

¹ Statistics Canada conducts the CSD every five years. The CSD uses the following screening questions to identify adults with developmental disabilities: “Has a doctor, psychologist or other health care professional ever said that you had a developmental disability or disorder? This may include Down syndrome, autism, Asperger syndrome, mental impairment due to a lack of oxygen at birth, etc.” As such, the CSD relies on diagnoses to identify those with developmental disabilities. While respondents are also asked how often and to what degree their daily activities are limited, their responses to these questions are not used in the CSD definition of developmental disability (as they are for other disability types) (Statistics Canada, 2018b).

The CSD includes only those who have been diagnosed with a developmental disability by a health practitioner and who are living in private households; those living in institutions, including residential care facilities, as well as those who are homeless are excluded from the survey. Therefore, Statistics Canada data alone is somewhat limited in its ability to provide information on housing need among Canadians with developmental disabilities. However, a number of studies on developmental disabilities among homeless populations (both Canadian and international) indicate a substantially higher prevalence of developmental (or intellectual) disability among homeless populations than among the general population. In addition, studies have found that those with intellectual disabilities are at greater risk of homelessness in comparison to the general population (Durbin, Isaacs, et al., 2018; Johnson, n.d.; Loughheed & Farrell, 2013; Mercier & Picard, 2011; Nishio et al., 2017; Nishio, Yamamoto, Horita, et al., 2015; Nishio, Yamamoto, Ueki, et al., 2015). Recent Canadian estimates of housing need among those with intellectual disabilities are in line with the results of these studies. The Canadian Association for Community Living estimates that as many as 120,000 adults with intellectual disabilities face a gap in housing and housing supports, and that almost 25,000 Canadians with significant intellectual disabilities are in core housing need (Alzheimer Society of Canada et al., 2017).

Studies also show that, when people with developmental disabilities lack adequate housing and supports, the effects often extend beyond this population, impacting their families and other caregivers. In Canada, a substantial proportion of adults with developmental disabilities live with parents or other family members because of a lack of resources and/or community supports which would enable them to live in their own homes.² The care responsibilities placed on families can be unsustainable, requiring significant investments of time (in some cases, 24/7 care) and financial resources (Alzheimer Society of Canada et al., 2017; The Cribwolf Foundation, 2018). According to the Cribwolf Foundation, many parents who are caring for their intellectually-disabled adult children have no one in line to take over their care responsibilities when they are no longer able to do so (The Cribwolf Foundation, 2018). According to one Canadian author, “more than 75% of adult Canadians with intellectual disabilities who do not live with their families are living in poverty and are at a very high risk of homelessness” (Johnson, n.d.). This may be an increasing issue as Canada’s population continues to age (Statistics Canada, 2018a).

2.0 Identified housing needs

Housing features

The nature of developmental disabilities and the specific housing needs of those with developmental disabilities vary greatly. Considering this, the literature focusses to a greater extent on discussion of needed supports than on specific features of home design for those with developmental disabilities. Nevertheless, the literature indicates that accessible housing may be necessary for a large proportion of those with developmental disabilities. Studies show that developmental disabilities frequently co-occur with other disabilities, including physical disabilities (Bizier et al., 2012; Burra, Stergiopoulos, & Rourke, 2009; Statistics Canada, 2015; Tanudjaja et al., 2018). According to Statistics Canada, in 2012, the vast majority (94%) of those

² Authors of a recent submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing estimate that 13,200 adults with intellectual disabilities aged 30 and older live with their parents because they do not have the resources or community support to live in their own homes (Alzheimer Society of Canada et al., 2017).

who reported a developmental disability also reported at least one other type of disability—including memory, learning, mental health-related, physical, and/or hearing/seeing disabilities (Bizier et al., 2012). In addition, Canadian experts have estimated that over 60% of Canadians with severe intellectual disabilities also have agility or mobility-related disabilities, and roughly one quarter are visually impaired (Tanudjaja et al., 2018). The co-occurrence of physical disabilities is particularly prevalent among seniors with developmental disabilities (Statistics Canada, 2015). Therefore, depending on the nature of the disability and the presence of co-occurring physical limitations, accessibility features may be required to meet housing needs (Habitat for Humanity Canada, 2018). For example, for those with mobility impairments, accommodations such as accessible entrances, lifts, lowered counter tops, and larger bathrooms (with additional space for turning around) may be required. Those with visual impairments may require houses equipped with audio warning devices or tactile signage. Similarly, those with hearing impairments may require visual alarms (Crawford, 2008).

A few sources also identified technologies which can increase independence for people with developmental disabilities. People with developmental disabilities may benefit from units which dispense medications at specific times of the day, and applications (for use on computers, tablets, or other devices) which convey step-by-step instructions and/or issue reminders for completing daily tasks (Haddad, 2017; The Developmental Services Housing Task Force, 2016).

While information about housing features is limited, the literature, as well as recent media reports, provide some indication of the types of housing arrangements that may be appropriate for those with developmental disabilities, as well as the amenities that these arrangements can include. Depending on individual needs and capabilities—and as long as other needed supports are in place (see discussion below)—this population can be successfully housed in individualized accommodations (where individuals rent or own their housing), group homes, or shared-living arrangements (Hole, Robinson, Stainton, Lige, & Crawford, 2015; McConkey, Keogh, Bunting, Garcia Iriarte, & Watson, 2016; Reindl, Waltz, & Schippers, 2016; Tanudjaja et al., 2018). In their study of people with intellectual disabilities in Ireland who had been relocated into various care settings (personalized/individualized accommodations, group homes, or congregated settings), McConkey et al. (2016) noted that younger individuals with fewer support needs tend to be placed into rented accommodations with individualized support, whereas individuals who always require support with daily living tasks are typically placed in group home or congregated settings. However, this study found that even those with high support needs (requiring assistance in managing medical conditions, administering medications, and/or dealing with challenging behaviours and feelings of depression) could be successfully housed in personalized living arrangements with additional staffing allocated to them (McConkey et al., 2016). In their exploration of home sharing arrangements for people with intellectual disabilities,³ Hole et al. (2015) found that the success of these arrangements requires: a good match between the person(s) with intellectual disabilities and the resident providing care; proactive planning; and effective, individualized supports which promote the right balance between independence and assistance (Hole et al., 2015). From these studies, it seems that success in any living arrangement depends largely on the availability of support staff and the extent to which supports are tailored to individual needs.

³ In this study, home sharing arrangements are defined as a situation in which one or more adults with an intellectual disability shares a home with someone who is paid to provide residential and additional support as needed (Hole, Robinson, Stainton, Lige, & Crawford, 2015).

The Cribwolf Foundation’s plans for a new group home for people with developmental disabilities provide some indication of the types of amenities that may be beneficial for this population. Recognizing the importance of allowing people with developmental disabilities choice and control over their daily activities to the extent possible, the home will include individual apartments (with utilities available depending on individual occupants’ capabilities and needs), as well as shared recreational spaces—and residents will have the ability to come and go between these spaces at their own discretion. In addition, the home will be situated in close proximity to public transit to enable residents to access community resources outside of the home as they are able (The Cribwolf Foundation, 2018).

Home and other needed supports

The literature identifies a range of support needs for those with developmental disabilities. People with intellectual disabilities can face diverse challenges related to learning, communicating and forming relationships with others, and adapting to dominant behavioural norms. They also tend to have difficulties with adaptive functioning, and engaging with service providers and with the labour force. All of these factors can affect their ability to meet their housing needs (Bizier et al., 2012; Durbin, Isaacs, et al., 2018; Statistics Canada, 2015; Tanudjaja et al., 2018). (See Section 3.0 for a more in-depth discussion of these challenges).

According to Deifell, Dreiseszun, Jill, O’Neill, and Sinclair (2009), “programs and services are critical components of all housing for special populations regardless of funding and design.” The literature suggests that, depending on individual needs, those with developmental disabilities could require any or all of the following supports as part of a successful housing strategy:

- ▶ support for day-to-day living and completion of daily activities, such as getting to appointments, running errands, doing housework, preparing meals, and taking care of personal finances, personal care, and medical care⁴
- ▶ communications and behavioural supports, which may enhance individuals’ ability to engage with service providers, and adapt successfully to group or independent living situations
- ▶ vocational and/or personal development supports, which may assist individuals in engaging with the labour force and/or the wider community (Bizier et al., 2012; Durbin, Isaacs, et al., 2018; Tanudjaja et al., 2018)

Other identified needs

The literature highlights the importance of recognizing the long-term nature of developmental disabilities. A number of studies (primarily focussed on assessing the needs of homeless individuals with developmental disabilities) have highlighted that, as developmental disabilities are often life-long, those with developmental disabilities have care needs for a longer period of time than those without disabilities. This can have a number of implications for housing-related service delivery. For example, younger adults with developmental disabilities are often cared for by family members, and require systems in place to care for them when their families (primarily aging parents) are no longer able to do so. In addition, those with developmental disabilities who are exiting homelessness may require provision of ongoing care and support to prevent them

⁴ According to Statistics Canada data, nine in 10 adults with a developmental disability require some assistance with daily activities, such as those listed (Statistics Canada, 2015).

from returning to homelessness (Deifell, Dreiseszun, Jill, O'Neill, & Sinclair, 2009; Durbin, Isaacs, et al., 2018; McConkey et al., 2016; Straaten et al., 2017).

2.1 Needs and design considerations related to specific types of developmental disabilities

As mentioned in Section 1.2, while developmental disabilities include a range of conditions, there are similarities in housing-related challenges, barriers, and needs across this population. Therefore, much of the literature discusses housing needs for people with developmental (or intellectual) disabilities collectively. Nevertheless, a few of the studies that emerged from this literature review identified specific housing-related considerations that are important for those with particular types of developmental disability — cerebral palsy, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), in particular. These considerations are discussed below.

Cerebral palsy and other neurological disorders

For people with cerebral palsy or other neurological disorders, physical accessibility is especially important for ensuring that individuals can live successfully in their housing arrangement. Key housing features/recommendations identified in the literature for this population include the following:

- ▶ Housing design should facilitate physical access/accessibility both inside and outside of the home; ensure safety, security, and privacy within a home/homey environment; and provide access to rehabilitation and exercise facilities.
- ▶ Housing should be located within close proximity and with physical access to local amenities and services, and to a person's social networks (Wright, Zeeman, Kendall, & Whitty, 2017).

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)

People with FASD may be prone to volatile outbursts or have a history of non-compliance, addictions, and/or mental health issues. In addition, they may have difficulties with budgeting, shopping, household maintenance, social relationships, and other skills needed to achieve and maintain successful housing. Given these potential challenges, the literature identifies that housing strategies for adults with FASD should consider the following:

- ▶ Group home models are not always the most appropriate housing option for adults with FASD.
- ▶ Low barrier housing (where admission to housing does not depend on individuals having a certain level of cognitive function or meeting alcohol and/or drug-free criteria) and a harm reduction model (as promoted by a Housing First Approach — see Section 4.0) can be beneficial.
- ▶ Adults with FASD may also benefit from on-site tenancy support (with workers who have experience related to addiction and mental health issues), and from services which connect people with housing and income support (Burns, 2009).

It is important to note, however, that FASD by definition includes individuals with a range (or spectrum) of abilities and deficits, which vary according to the degree of central nervous system damage and the presence or absence of secondary disabilities. As conditions vary across this population, so do housing needs (Burns, 2009).

Autism Spectrum Disorder

The sensory environment is particularly important for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). As factors such as geometry, textures, colours, lighting, spatial sequence, and functional zoning can influence perceptions and behaviours among autistic individuals, it is important to consider these factors in designing or selecting suitable housing for this population (Mostafa, 2010).

A number of recommendations related to housing design for autistic individuals emerged from the literature. With regard to environmental acoustics, design recommendations include:

- ▶ using sound-reducing techniques for external and internal walls;
- ▶ using non-reflective sound absorbent materials on floors, walls, and ceilings;
- ▶ covering closures and openings (doors, windows) with sound traps or heavy curtains to reduce noise permeability; and
- ▶ considering spatial geometry to reduce echoes (Mostafa, 2010).

With regard to the tactile environment, design recommendations for those on the autism spectrum depend on the nature of the textural sensitivity; for hyper-textural individuals, smooth and soft materials are recommended, whereas a hypo-textural resident would benefit from stimulation through the use of rough textures in design (Mostafa, 2010).

Design recommendations regarding lighting include:

- ▶ avoiding the use of fluorescent lights (which can flicker and produce a low humming sound);
- ▶ using soft-tone lights and indirect natural lighting (direct natural lighting should be used strategically, as windows provide visible accessibility to the outside and can be distracting for autistic individuals); and
- ▶ installing dimmer switches so that residents can control light intensity (Mostafa, 2010).

Recommendations related to colour include using pale and neutral colours, with minimal use of patterns and brighter colours (Mostafa, 2010).

Other design suggestions include the following:

- ▶ organizing spaces in a sequential manner, which reflects residents' daily routines
- ▶ avoiding placing areas of high stimulation (such as bathrooms and kitchens) next to quiet areas (such as bedrooms, workspaces, or study areas where focus and attention are important)
- ▶ ensuring residents' access to gardens or natural landscaped areas which can help with sensory regulation (Mostafa, 2010)

Mostafa (2010) notes that, as autistic individuals can struggle with depth perception, safety considerations should be taken into account in the placement and design of windows, balconies, and other openings.

3.0 Challenges and barriers in accessing housing needs

Personal difficulties limiting access to housing needs

As identified above, developmental disabilities are often associated with limitations in intellectual capacity and adaptive skills (Government of Canada, 2018). The literature provides evidence that these limitations can have direct implications on individuals' ability to connect with housing and other service systems, and, ultimately, to avoid and/or escape homelessness. As people with developmental disabilities may experience neurocognitive difficulties with memory, attention, information processing, financial management, and literacy, they may experience greater difficulty (compared to the general population) in navigating fragmented service systems, accessing needed housing and community-based services, and maintaining independent housing status (Burra et al., 2009; Lougheed & Farrell, 2013; Raine, Connelly, & MacNeil, n.d.; Tanudjaja et al., 2018).

Studies have also found that people with developmental disabilities (in particular intellectual disabilities and certain conditions, such as autism) may experience greater difficulties with relationships and social adaptation, which can impact their ability to meet their housing needs.⁵ Those who struggle with relationships tend to experience greater difficulty in living with other individuals (in shelter environments, group homes, or other congregated residences) and in interacting with service providers. They may also be more likely to refuse social support and services. All of these factors can be barriers to transitioning out of homelessness (Burra et al., 2009; Nishio et al., 2017; Nishio, Yamamoto, Ueki, et al., 2015).

Meeting the housing-related needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities may be further undermined by a lack of information about the prevalence of these disabilities among those in housing need. Studies indicate that intellectual disabilities may be underdiagnosed, as testing methods and procedures vary, and behaviours associated with these disabilities may be attributed to other causes (Burra et al., 2009; Raine et al., n.d.). In addition, individuals may either lack the communication skills to relay information to health providers or they may be reluctant to do so out of fear of being stigmatized (Johnson, n.d.; Lougheed & Farrell, 2013). A lack of information about the prevalence of intellectual disability among those in housing need, and about the wants and needs of this population, makes it more difficult to serve them (Lougheed & Farrell, 2013).

Discrimination/stigma

Discrimination is a major challenge faced by people with developmental disabilities. Some authors have gone so far as to describe stereotypes and stigmas as “often the most serious challenges” faced by developmentally-disabled individuals (Tanudjaja et al., 2018, p. 8). Those with developmental disabilities often experience increased levels of poverty and social exclusion,

⁵ For example, a 2017 study of homeless individuals in Japan found that those with cognitive disabilities tend to view “bad relationships with their family members” as the main cause of their homelessness, in contrast to homeless individuals without cognitive disabilities, who primarily identified debt as the main cause (Nishio et al., 2017, p. 184).

and are often more vulnerable to abuse than the general population (Johnson, n.d.). In addition, intellectually-disabled individuals, in particular, may be subject to false or inaccurate assumptions about their ability to contribute to society and live independently (Tanudjaja et al., 2018).

Discriminatory views may disadvantage developmentally-disabled individuals in meeting their housing needs in a number of ways. Landlords may be less willing or unwilling to rent to people with developmental disabilities. In addition, discrimination may lead to unequal choice in the rental market, where developmentally-disabled individuals have access only to units that are overpriced, poorly-maintained, or undesirable in some other way (Tanudjaja et al., 2018).

In the past, stereotypes and assumptions about those with developmental disabilities led to an institutional housing model; it was assumed that such individuals were unable to contribute to society, and therefore required institutionalization. Problems with the institutional model of care have been well-documented, and include abuse, overcrowded or substandard living conditions. In Canada (as in other countries) there has been a movement toward deinstitutionalization. Nevertheless, according to Tanudjaja et al., a lack of access to affordable housing and to independent community living with support services has meant that many people with developmental disabilities continue to live in “alternate forms of institutionalization,” such as nursing and personal care homes. These living arrangements are often not well suited to the needs of developmentally-disabled individuals, and may result in an unnecessary loss of control over day-to-day decisions (2018, p. 20).

Financial challenges

People with developmental disabilities may also experience financial challenges that can limit their ability to meet their housing needs. As mentioned above, Canadian statistics show that, in comparison to the general population, those with developmental disabilities tend to: have lower-than-average incomes; have less access to, and lower rates of, paid employment; and disproportionately rely on government sources of income assistance (Bizier et al., 2012; Statistics Canada, 2015; Tanudjaja et al., 2018). It has been shown that, at least in some parts of the country, rates of income assistance are not sufficient to cover the cost of access to housing without additional subsidy or shelter allowance. In addition, those experiencing intellectual and other developmental disabilities may face additional expenses for disability-related supports, including technical aids and devices, personal assistance, and environmental accommodations, which can further challenge their ability to afford adequate housing (Tanudjaja et al., 2018).

Limited availability of needed services and supports

Some Canadian sources have acknowledged that funding for services and programs designed to support people with developmental disabilities is limited, which increases this population’s vulnerability to housing loss and homelessness (Lougheed & Farrell, 2013; Raine et al., n.d.; Tanudjaja et al., 2018). As identified in Section 2.0, people with developmental disabilities may require a variety of supports (e.g., medical services, personal care services, communications and behavioral services, vocational and personal development programs, etc.) to assist them in daily living. When funding for these types of supports is lacking, even developmentally-disabled individuals who have been able to secure affordable and adequate housing may struggle to live successfully in their housing arrangement (Raine et al., n.d.; Tanudjaja et al., 2018; Tutton, 2018a). As Lougheed and Farrell note, when people with developmental disabilities experience a

breakdown in their living situation, “there are few social support services available to prevent their journey to homelessness and the shelters” (2013, p. 231). Recent media reports also provide evidence that, as institutions for people with developmental disabilities have closed in Canada, some have ended up in psychiatric facilities and nursing homes, due to a lack of support to help these individuals transfer successfully to community-based living (Tutton, 2018a).

Intersectionality with other vulnerabilities

In contrast to other forms of disability, the rate of developmental disability is highest among younger adults (1.2% of those aged 15 to 24, in contrast to only 0.4% of those 65 and older) (Bizier et al., 2012; Statistics Canada, 2015). Not only is the prevalence of developmental disabilities higher among youth, the literature provides evidence that youth with developmental disabilities experience unique housing challenges—particularly as they transition into adulthood. Some studies have shown that, among the homeless population, the age of entry into homelessness is generally lower for those with developmental disabilities than for those without disabilities (i.e., those with developmental disabilities tend to become homeless at a younger age) (Nishio, Yamamoto, Ueki, et al., 2015; Vana, n.d.). This is, in part, due to difficulties that developmentally disabled youth may face in transitioning from pediatric services and systems of care (health, housing) into adult service systems, and, in part, due to a gap in support that can occur once they reach adulthood (Rushowy, 2018; Vana, n.d.).

The latter issue has been highlighted in recent media reports focusing on the situation in Ontario, in particular. In this province, families of children with developmental disabilities receive funding for supportive housing, but this funding ends when children turn 18. As wait lists for supportive housing can be very long, this can result in a gap of support, where young adults with developmental disabilities must wait years to receive funding for supportive housing. Advocates have argued that there is a need for funding to extend beyond age 18 (transitional funding), until individuals with developmental disabilities have been able to secure other forms of support, such as funding through the Government of Ontario’s Passport program (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2018; Rushowy, 2018).⁶

The literature did not reveal particular insights about the extent to which the challenges faced by those with developmental disabilities intersect with challenges resulting from other vulnerabilities (gender, sexual orientation, race, newcomer or veteran status).

4.0 Potential and proven solutions

Toward a community-based living model with individualized planning

Over the past few decades, there has been increasing recognition—both within Canada and internationally—that people with developmental disabilities should be afforded some choice and control over their housing and daily living, and they should not live in situations that isolate them from friends, family, or the broader community (Deifell et al., 2009; Harflett, Pitts, Greig, & Bown, 2017; Loughheed & Farrell, 2013; Tanudjaja et al., 2018). Article 19 of the *United Nations*

⁶ The Passport program is designed for those 18 years and older with a developmental disability. Passport provides funding to support individuals with developmental disabilities in taking classes, participating in recreational programs that teach life skills, hiring support workers, or providing temporary respite for caregivers (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2018; Rushowy, 2018).

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes that persons with disabilities have equal right to live independently, as well as the right to full inclusion and participation in the community. This means ensuring that:

- ▶ “persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;”
- ▶ “persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;” and
- ▶ “community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs” (United Nations, 2006, p. 11).

While the Convention was only ratified by the Government of Canada (with support of the provinces and territories) in March of 2010, since the 1990s, Canadian policy has been shifting away from supporting institutionalized care for people with developmental disabilities towards supporting a more integrated, community living-based model of care (Brown & Radford, 2015; Tanudjaja et al., 2018). A number of benefits of community-based (i.e., non-institutionalized) living for people with developmental disabilities—with appropriate supports in place—have been identified in the literature, including that community-based living can:

- ▶ enhance opportunities for paid employment and/or educational development;
- ▶ lead to higher rates of community engagement and participation;
- ▶ result in a greater ability to perform activities of daily living; and
- ▶ have positive effects on individuals’ self-determination, health, and well-being (Harflett et al., 2017; King et al., 2017; McConkey et al., 2016; Tanudjaja et al., 2018; Varey, 2014).

The literature identifies a variety of community-based living arrangements for those with developmental disabilities—ranging from individualized accommodation (where those with developmental disabilities rent or own their housing, often with individualized support) to group home or shared-living arrangements (where accommodations are shared and support staff may be available) (Hole et al., 2015; McConkey et al., 2016; Reindl et al., 2016; Tanudjaja et al., 2018). In general, community-based options that offer people with developmental disabilities greater choice and control have been associated with positive outcomes (namely, increased personal relationships and community engagement) in comparison with institutional/residential living arrangements (McConkey et al., 2016; Raine et al., n.d.).

However, as the specific needs of people with developmental disabilities and their ability to live independently varies, a number of studies have highlighted the importance of individualized planning or personalized case management to ensure that individuals are connected with the services and supports that they need to be successful in their living arrangement (Burra et al., 2009; Harflett et al., 2017; Raine et al., n.d.; Tanudjaja et al., 2018).

Housing First

Some studies have examined the Housing First model for its ability to meet the needs of those with intellectual disabilities who are experiencing homelessness (Durbin, Isaacs, et al., 2018; Durbin, Lunsky, et al., 2018; Nishio et al., 2017; Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2016). While most of these studies have concluded that further research is needed to determine the benefits of the Housing First approach for diverse populations in general (and for those with intellectual disabilities, in particular), some have pointed out ways in which the Housing First model may apply to those with intellectual disabilities. As mentioned in Section 2.1, a Housing First approach has no housing readiness or compliance requirements, which may be difficult for people with developmental disabilities to meet. Housing First emphasizes choice, self-determination, and increased community participation (Durbin, Lunsky, et al., 2018). In this way, it is well aligned with provisions of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, as well as with the literature (discussed above) demonstrating the benefits of community participation for those with developmental disabilities. In addition, Nishio et al. pointed out the effect that stable housing can have on individuals' ability to "recover their human and local relationships," and implied that this may be especially relevant to those with intellectual disabilities who struggle with maintaining good relationships with family and with service providers, and for whom relationship issues are a main contributor to their housing issues (2017, p. 187).

These studies recognize, however, that for Housing First strategies to be adapted to persons with intellectual disabilities, they should be accompanied by additional individualized services designed to meet the specific needs of those with these disabilities and to enhance their functioning. Depending on the individual and the type of disability, such services could include job training, behavioural and occupational therapy, audiology, speech language pathology, counselling/psychotherapy, and/or treatment programs as needed (Durbin, Lunsky, et al., 2018; Nishio et al., 2017).

Housing initiatives currently in place to address the needs of those with developmental disabilities

Media reports provide evidence of recent housing initiatives—initiated by both governmental and non-governmental organizations—that are being designed to address issues faced by, or to enhance services available to, those with developmental disabilities. Recent examples of government initiatives include the following:

- ▶ The federal government has recently launched a federal housing fund—the National Housing Co-Investment Fund—which includes some funding for vulnerable groups, including those with developmental disabilities. Over the next 10 years, the \$13.2 billion fund will support the creation or repair of a variety of housing units, including:
 - construction of 60,000 new affordable units;
 - repair of 240,000 affordable and community units;
 - construction or repair of 4,000 shelter spaces for survivors of family violence;
 - creation of 7,000 new affordable units for seniors; and
 - creation of 2,400 affordable units for people with developmental disabilities (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, n.d.; Press, 2018).

- ▶ Funding from Ontario’s Ministry of Community and Social Services is supporting a non-profit initiative aimed at enhancing services for people with developmental disabilities and mental illness. The St. Catharines Mainstream Non-Profit Housing Project and Gateway Residential and Community Support Services are consolidating their administrative programs to better serve those with developmental disabilities (“Housing agencies form alliance to enhance service,” 2018). Both organizations offer supported living and supportive independent living programs in the Niagara region to people with mental health issues or developmental disabilities (Gateway Residential & Community Support Services, 2018; Mainstream Services, 2018).
- ▶ Recent reports also indicate that the Province of Nova Scotia is working to improve its Disability Support Program, and to create more small-option homes for people with intellectual disabilities who have been living in institutions. These small unit homes are to be designed to house three or four residents. Day-to-day support will be provided to allow residents to live successfully in the community. The limited availability of small-option homes for people with developmental disabilities has been the subject of a recent human rights enquiry in the province. The enquiry has examined the negative impacts of a policy decision in the 1990s, which resulted in a freeze on the creation of small-option supported housing (Média, 2018; Tutton, 2018a).

Recent media reports have highlighted the problem of long waiting lists for supportive housing for people with developmental disabilities, but have also highlighted the creative efforts of non-governmental organizations and individuals to address this issue, including the following:

- ▶ In Guelph, Ontario, a father of a man with a developmental disability (Evan Petrie) is turning his own home into a group home. Evan, 30 years old as of September 2017, has been on a waiting list for supportive housing since he was 14. The house will provide accommodation for Evan, as well as for three to six others in need of supported independent living arrangements. Trillium West Real Estate, as well as a crowd-funding campaign, have helped with fundraising efforts to cover the costs of converting the house into appropriate group home accommodations (Lovell, 2017).
- ▶ In Nova Scotia, the non-profit organization Support Services Group Co-operative Limited, based in Dartmouth, has started a service to assist people with disabilities to avoid wait lists and find appropriate accommodations and associated supports. For a yearly fee, clients of the organization are assigned a supervisor who helps them find housing, as well as employment, if necessary, and connects them with other needed services. According to an article published by CBC News in November 2017, those on the province’s wait list for supportive housing can wait upwards of eight years to find housing (Corfu, 2017).
- ▶ Habitat for Humanity Prince Edward Island has begun a new housing project called Vision 20-20, which aims to provide housing for vulnerable groups, including refugees, veterans, and families affected by disabilities (Spencer, 2018).

A housing project recently initiated by the Cribwolf Foundation has also received recent media attention. The Cribwolf Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping meet the growing demand for supportive housing in Ontario. Its mandate is to “identify, fund, and construct architecturally friendly housing solutions to directly address the housing crisis affecting special needs individuals” (The Cribwolf Foundation, 2018). The Cribwolf Foundation has proposed construction of a community-central multi-unit residential building for adults aged 21 and older with intellectual and/or other developmental disabilities. Current designs for the unit propose the following amenities:

- ▶ twenty-four individual self-contained, single-occupancy apartments with utilities and appliances available depending on the occupant’s (and their family’s) capabilities and wishes;
- ▶ recreational rooms in a common area which provide access to activities, such as life skills, music, and art classes, exercise therapy, movie and TV watching, parties, and other wellness programs, and will allow services providers, medical staff, and other support agencies a place to interact with residents;
- ▶ close proximity to public transportation routes to allow capable residents access to community resources outside of the home; and
- ▶ a specialized shuttle service for group activities.

Individuals will have access to their own apartments at all times, and will be able to make their own choices in relation to participation in activities. However, to ensure safety (while allowing residents the freedom to come and go to the extent possible), staff members will track each resident using a centralized monitoring system (“Group aims to ease housing crisis for parents of adults with developmental disabilities,” 2018; The Cribwolf Foundation, 2018).

On a more systemic level, the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) is also noted in the literature for its beneficial work in addressing housing-related issues for those with developmental disabilities (Tanudjaja et al., 2018). CACL is a national advocacy organization working to support people with intellectual disabilities by defending their rights and advocating for their inclusion into Canadian society. CACL is part of the national *My Home My Community* (MHMC) initiative, along with People First of Canada, and CACL’s member organizations. The MHMC initiative aims to increase housing affordability, and improve access for Canadians with disabilities to affordable housing and community services through social and financial investments. Through MHMC, CACL works to create linkages among “residential and community support agencies, adults with intellectual disabilities, families, financial institutions, housing developers, community networks designing safer and more inclusive communities, thought leaders, and government partners” (Canadian Association for Community Living, 2017). As part of the MHMC initiative, CACL is administering surveys to gather information directly from people with developmental disabilities, as well as their families and service providers, on the housing needs and preferences of this population. In addition, the MHMC initiative assists local organizations in fostering partnerships with other organizations, and in developing the leadership capacity needed to make positive changes in providing residential and other supports to people with developmental disabilities (Canadian Association for Community Living & People First of Canada, n.d.).

International initiatives

While an in-depth examination of international best practices in housing design for people with intellectual disabilities was beyond the scope of this review, a few examples of successful housing initiatives in other countries emerged from the literature. These are described below.

- ▶ The Charis Workhome Project is a housing project for autistic adults located in the Netherlands. The project consists of three adjacent buildings; two apartment buildings (each housing four single-bedroom apartments) are surrounded by a central building containing a group kitchen, laundry room, living room, and four hobby/activity areas. The four hobby areas are to be used as “vocational workplaces.” The home is designed to house eight adults with autism. The Charis Workhome Project was designed using a “sensory design model,” in which a sensory design matrix was used to generate architectural recommendations⁷ (Mostafa, 2010, p. 40).
- ▶ Sweetwater Spectrum is another community for adults with autism, located in Sonoma, California. This community operates on a resident-centred model, where residents have control over their daily activities and choose their own housemates, and where supports are customized to residents’ individual care needs. Residents and their families can choose support service providers independent of Sweetwater; Sweetwater functions primarily as a landlord, but communicates and collaborates with residents’ service providers. In terms of design, special considerations were made to minimize visual stimulation, ambient sound, lighting, and odors, and to create “soothing” natural landscaping outdoors. Furniture is selected by residents. Residents have access to “enrichment activities,” which include art and music classes, games, and fitness activities. Residents can choose to work on the community’s urban farm, or engage in outdoor recreational activities onsite, including hiking and swimming (Connery, 2016; Sweetwater Spectrum, n.d.).
- ▶ International L’Arche Federation communities are a housing model in which individuals with and without intellectual disabilities live together in group-home-like settings. L’Arche communities are located in many countries around the world, including in Canada. While each community is an independent legal entity and community size, design, and amenities vary depending on local context, they hold some common design concepts/features. Communities comprise one or several households where members with and without disabilities share their lives. L’Arche homes traditionally house four to six persons with disabilities, and two to three “live in” assistants. Community members share in decision-making, activities, and chores. Additional “live out” assistants, comprising family, friends, and volunteers offer additional support. In general, those without disabilities living in the communities (both volunteers and employees) assist those with disabilities in a wide variety of tasks, including cooking, household maintenance, medical or personal care, and so forth. Many communities also run workshops or activity centres for residents (Connery, 2016; L’Arche Canada, n.d.; L’Arche International, n.d.).

⁷ Architectural attributes (e.g., texture, colour, lighting, symmetry, etc.) were listed on the vertical axis of the design matrix, and sensory issues (e.g., auditory, visual, tactile, olfactory, proprioceptive issues, as well as their various manifestations: hypersensitivity, hyposensitivity, and distortion) were listed on the horizontal axis. Design recommendations were generated based on the intersections between architectural attributes and sensory issues experienced by residents (Mostafa, 2010).

Canada currently has 31 L'Arche communities, which are located in nine provinces. Together, Canada's L'Arche communities support over 800 persons with intellectual disabilities (L'Arche Canada, n.d.).

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