

Housing and Disability Summit White Paper

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As part of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, and with a strong belief that the American Dream belongs to everyone, three organizations formed a collaborative network to service individuals with developmental disabilities living in North Dakota. The network was named the North Dakota Developmental Disabilities Network (NDDDN), and includes: The North Dakota Protection and Advocacy Project, the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities, and the North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities. The trio strives to assure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to culturally competent community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion in all facets of community life.

The activities of each entity belonging to NDDDN fall within core emphasis areas established at the federal level. Emphasis areas include:

- quality assurance activities
- education and early intervention activities
- child-care related activities
- health-related activities
- employment-related activities
- housing-related activities
- transportation-related activities
- recreation-related activities
- other services available/offered to individuals in a community, including formal and informal community supports that affect quality of life

To gather current input on these emphasis areas, a series of summit meetings were designed. The summits were structured to encourage discussion and input from participants, and to gather information from professionals working in the emphasis areas. Each summit meeting covered one emphasis area, began with a keynote speaker, involved the audience in small group work, and featured a panel of presenters who discussed their particular experience with some aspect of the emphasis area. During the small group work, participants developed lists of actionable steps that may possibly be used by NDDDN agencies in future strategic goal planning. Results of the summit meetings are published in white papers and disseminated through websites to make information available to a broader range of constituents.

On September 15, 2009, the Ramada Inn and Suites in Fargo, ND hosted the Housing and Disability Summit. The summit opened with an explanation of the NDDDN and its purpose. Participants of the

workshop were introduced, and asked to identify their expectations for the summit. Identified expectations included:

- Understand laws/regulations
- Information/resources
- Accommodations/accessibility
- Disability comm.. – Where is ND at?
- Learn new things
- Housing – vital
- Options for home ownership
- Shortage/waiting lists
- Supp serv's: Independent Supported Living Assistance(ISLA) limited
- Housing availability in rural areas
- Therapeutic animals
- Technology
- Affordable and decent housing
- Resource help for home owners
- Financing
- Landlord issues
- Integrated housing
- Tenant issues
- Whole process
- Eligible for money, support and access to accessible home
- Increase the numbers of people should own their homes
- Accessible environment surrounding home

Amy Schauer-Nelson from the Fair Housing of the Dakotas was the keynote speaker. Ms Schauer-Nelson presented an overview of the organization speaking specifically about The Fair Housing Act and other relevant Federal, state and local laws on housing. She also discussed reasonable accommodations pertaining to the tenant and landlord, the use of service animals, and new design and construction criteria under The Fair Housing Act.

Based on the information presented by the keynote speaker, four main topic areas were developed and written on flow charts, which were then placed around the room. Following the keynote presentation, summit participants were directed to pick the topics they were most interested in, and spend fifteen minutes in discussion to identify actionable steps that could address each topic area. This process was completed three additional times, which provided participants the opportunity to discuss all topic areas. Topic areas and actionable steps identified during the small group work included:

Disability Related Rights:

- Publications on rights and complaint filing
- Legislation to fix accessibility case problem
- More accessible features be required (like wheelchair door/auto opening)
- Require contractors be certified on installing/making accessible features

- Everyone be brought in compliance (accessible parking, routes, etc)
- Classes for people with disabilities on how to be a good renter
- Public forums to educate people with disabilities on understanding referendums, voting options, where tax increases go
- State law to clearly define guest policies (some too restrictive by LLS)
- Community based service policies (ISLA) of 30 days
- User friendly education
 - Service providers (PHA's)
- Educate people on the value of housing
- Adequate language services
- Directory to identify available resources (who, what service and where located)

Disability – Related Supports/Services:

- Money on all levels – Lobby legislature/city and county commissions
- Higher wages for support staff – decrease turnover
- More education on housing rights – state level too
- More accessible forms (complaint) understandable
- Transportation – more options
- Security deposit/1st month rent assistance – weatherization
- Support to victims evicted – rental assist – education on landlord/tenant laws
- Technology
 - TDT Phones – Hearing impaired
 - Fire Alarms
 - Accessible alarm – strobe lights – auditory
 - A.C.
 - Elevators
 - Circuit breaker
 - Braille
 - Mailboxes
 - Doors
- Smart Homes
- Audio signs, appliances (people who do not know Braille)
- Service animal support/rights
- Programs for hearing impaired
- ISLA Changes so services not lost
- Case managers overwhelmed so tend to only help in emergency situations (mental health) – lack of equal services for mental health

Home Ownership:

- Educate on: 1) availability; 2) qualification and 3) access
- Include family self-sufficiency program (FSS)
- Eligibility (Can Section 8 voucher go toward mortgage) HUD approval
- Builders (Habitat for Humanity, Easter Seals, etc)
- Section 8 home ownership vouchers
 - Educate Housing Authority

- Legislation for whole state to implement program
- Housing trust fund
- Down payment programs allowability for those on Section 8 (which doesn't allow funds to be set aside)
- Grants and tax credits
- More rent to own options
- Educate on whole process – having good credit, saving for down payment, how mortgage works
- HUD for home ownership (more)
- Affordable housing to purchase which is accessible
- Resource list for who to contact with problems after you own a home
- Understand home insurance policies
- Understanding what city requires (trash, etc)
- Requirements
 - HUD approval
 - Home ownership classes
 - Mortgage app and approval
 - Inspections

Rental Housing Availability:

- More affordable rents for those on living wages
- Needs assessment
- Universal designs/accessible designs
 - Educate architects, developers, etc
- Increase number of Section 8 vouchers to meet needs
- Incomes – Accessible rentals for higher incomes
- Housing which better fits the needs of tenants
- Service animal rights
- Lack of rural accessible housing
- Builders don't see need of housing in rural areas and metro
- More integrated housing. Don't group people with disabilities in certain complexes or areas
- Funds for housing repairs or modifications
- Tenant rights groups to fight for tenant rights
- Education programs for students on rental rights
- Bed Bugs! ! ! problem in ND (Roaches, bugs, etc)
- Some rental housing too institutional looking – needs variety
- Bad credit, no credit, criminal backgrounds – 2nd chance?
- Education
 - Builders
 - Tenants
 - Location
 - where to apply for various housing programs in the community
 - Identify where various housing options are located

After completion of the small group work, a panel presentation took place. Panelists shared their perspectives and experiences, identifying challenges they face, unmet needs they have identified, and potential solutions for those needs. The panel, composed of a combination of professionals and one consumer, included:

Mark Bourdon—Program Director for Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living, a disability rights organization.

Lisa McEvers – Appointed as Commission of Labor by Governor Hoeven in July 2005. Prior to this appointment she served as an Assistant State’s Attorney for Cass County ND as a prosecutor. Ms. McEvers serves on the Judiciary Standards Committee of ND Supreme Court, Continuing Legal Education Committee of ND State Bar Association, Rough Rider Industries Advisory Board and the ND MIG Leadership Council.

Neil Scharpe –President of the nonprofit Neighborhood Development Enterprises. Mr. Scharpe is also a Service Contract Specialist at NDCPD, currently serves as Project Director of the ND Data Linkage Grant. Mr. Scharpe has 24 years of experience as an administrator of a community rehabilitation program serving adults with developmental disabilities.

Deanna Bakken – Deanna is an advocate for people with disabilities. Ms Bakken is a Consumer Advisory Council member for NDCPD. She is also involved with a number of other committees and boards such as Red River Human Service Foundation.

Outcomes/Lessons Learned:

Upon completion of the panel discussion, participants of the workshop were asked to vote on what they felt were the highest priority steps that had been identified during the earlier small group work. Each participant was instructed to cast three votes, and had the options of voting for three separate issues, or casting all three votes for one issue that they felt the strongest about. Actionable steps identified as highest priorities as well as the number of votes cast for each are as follows:

<u>Number of votes:</u>	<u>Issue</u>
5	Require contractors to be certified on installing/making accessible features
4	Transportation – more options
4	Service animal rights
4	Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ TDT Phones – Hearing impaired ○ Fire Alarms ○ Accessible alarm – strobe lights – auditory ○ Air Conditioners ○ Elevators ○ Circuit breaker ○ Braille ○ Mailboxes ○ Doors
3	Classes for people with disabilities on how to be a good renter
3	ISLA Changes so services not lost
3	Tenant fights groups to fight for tenant rights

2	Case managers overwhelmed so tend to only help in emergency situations (mental health) – lack of equal services for mental health
2	Publications on rights and complaint filing
2	Educate on: 1) availability; 2) qualification and 3) access
2	Eligibility (Can Section 8 voucher go toward mortgage) HUD approval
2	Down payment programs allow-ability for those on Section 8 (which doesn't allow funds to be set aside)
2	More affordable rent for those on living wages
1	Educate on whole process – having good credit, saving for down payment, how mortgage works
1	Resource list for who to contact with problems after own a home
1	Understanding home insurance policies
1	Affordable housing to purchase which is accessible
1	More accessible features be required (like wheelchair door/auto opening)
1	Educate people on the <u>value</u> of housing
1	Public forums to educate people with disabilities on understanding referendums, voting options, where tax increases to go
1	Community based service policies (ISLA) of 30 days
1	Money on all levels
1	Higher wages for support staff – decrease turnover
1	Support to victims evicted; rental assist – education on landlord/tenant laws
1	Smart Homes
1	Service animal support/rights
1	Builders don't see need of housing in rural areas and metro
1	More integrated housing. Don't group people with disabilities in certain complexes or areas
1	Funds for housing repairs or modifications
1	Education programs for students on rental rights
1	Bad credit, no credit, criminal backgrounds – 2 nd chance?

The identified issues and proposed actionable steps can now be used to guide future strategic planning for the three partners of the NDDDN, providing the agencies with a road map of needs and priorities to reference when designing programs and work plans for the future. Although the summits were originally designed to elicit feedback from constituents on priority issues and actionable steps, indirect outcomes also resulted from the interactive group work, including:

- Networking among professionals from various agencies
- Education regarding services offered by agencies and programs
- Identification of new/increased priority areas for agencies
- Identification of possible funding sources for additional training
- Discussion of how agency personnel can collaborate on various issues

The primary objective of the Housing and Disabilities Summit to gather current information on issues and identify actionable steps was successfully met. As a result of the excellent interactive group work and lively discussion among attendees, participants unexpectedly identified individual action steps for themselves and their agencies.

NDDDN agencies now have current information to carry forward into planning processes. Using the information gleaned from the summit meeting, NDDDN members can structure work plans and design programs that are relevant to the needs of consumers and that ensure individuals with developmental disabilities have access to high quality programs and services that will promote self-determination, independence, productivity, integration and inclusion in all facets of community life.

Sponsored by the
North Dakota Developmental Disabilities Network (NDDDN)

