



Where have we been?
Where are we going?

2016 COMMUNITY HOUSING SUMMIT

Feedback at Community Housing Summit Shows Progress, But Room for Improvement

On September 28, 2016, the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, with the assistance of Bob Laux of the Wild River Consulting Group, hosted a Community Housing Summit in Columbus.

Representatives from around the state of Ohio were invited to attend the summit in order to garner information on the rights of individuals to live in a community setting, and the rights of county boards to demand representation - a seat at the table - in the Consolidated Planning Process.

During the summit, attendees were asked for their thoughts on a variety of questions ranging from the acceptance of individuals with developmental disabilities in their community to the need for more collaboration on housing issues.

The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council captured that feedback and has reproduced it in this brochure. We believe it provides terrific insight on how our communities are addressing community housing issues.

We selected the most pertinent responses and reproduced them here.

We hope you find them helpful.

Carolyn Knight
Executive Director
Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council



Carolyn Knight

Q: Do you think your communities are accepting of all people?

“Our community is trying. A lot has changed in 30 years, but we have a ways to go.”

“Part of the Appalachian mentality is that people take care of their own.”

“It’s not just the communities, it’s also the families. Some are offended when I ask about their future plans. They’ll tell me, ‘I’ll take care of it.’”

“There is a small percentage of communities that are accepting.”

“Our community is open to all, provided you can afford to live there!”

“No. I think there’s still a ‘not in my backyard’ mentality for anyone who is different or has special needs.”



“There are still misconceptions that people with certain disabilities cannot live on their own.”

“Smaller communities are very open and inclusive. We believe in taking care of our own.”

“When I bought my own home, I didn’t have any problems with acceptance in the community. It might be more of a problem for group home living.”

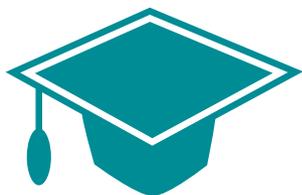
Q: What are some ways we can change to be more accepting?

“It all comes back to education. We bring in high school students to assist with Special Olympics programs.”

“We can’t force the issue. We want individuals to have community relationships to improve the quality of life. However, we need to better explain why the housing and jobs initiatives are important. It’s difficult for the community to understand.”

“The DD population has always had more support than other populations because of parents’ advocacy.”

“Host meetings with local housing groups and county boards for planning and assessment of needs. Home Choice and other resources are great. We must educate the community and individuals about these programs.”



“Start early education in the school systems. Increase integration and exposure.”

“Need more collaboration with landlords and rental managers so general apartment settings have more accessible units.”

“County boards, mental health agencies, independent living centers, etc. need to break down silos and talk to each other through collaborative meetings and conferences.”

Q: Do we need to ask for more consumer direction in what we do? Please explain.

“You can help someone find employment, but there needs to be a connection to the community.”

“People are rarely brought into the discussion during the conception stage of housing. We need to do a better job to connect with developers to make sure we are giving people what they want.”

“Yes, I think we are asking more now than we have. We need family involvement for folks living at home.”

“Always! Input from the end user is critical.”

“Yes, need to continue to get feedback in order to continue to have a clear understanding of the needs and expectations, and to facilitate conversations between consumers and landlords.”

“It’s important for consumers to share information about their needs.”



“We need to learn to communicate with people with disabilities.”

“Guardian input is questionable. Their motivation may not be aligned with the consumer.”

“Yes, definitely, and always. There should be focus groups for housing and accessibility.”

Q: Does your community work collaboratively toward common goals in housing?

“There needs to be collaboration with people who know and understand the community.”

“We have been fortunate that community people approach the housing authority with homes to sell.”

“If we just hand everything to consumers, they will not be self-sufficient.”

“Get the consumers involved from the beginning in identifying what they want and need.”

“We attend the ‘big meetings,’ but we are never represented in the grant. There is a piece of the puzzle missing.”

“It’s hard to find safe, decent housing and quality providers.”



“Houses are often sold before we can respond.”

“Our housing issues have been with landlords who rent to people independently and are on the side of being slumlords.”

“We are working, but we have room to improve and grow.”

What's missing from my community?

“There is a lack of central information about the housing that is available.”

“People don't know the difference between public housing and the voucher process.”

“We need better education.”

“Small, rural areas do not have a lot of options when it comes to housing.”

“Many landlords will not accept a Section 8 voucher. We meet with landlords and try to educate them. Our waiting list is two-three years.”

“Our housing organizations need to do more outreach.”

“Creative Housing focuses on the DD population, while Metropolitan Housing is in its own universe. They don't work together.”



“People don't know where to connect. People need access to the support systems that are available.”

“When it comes to housing, our choices are limited.”

“We need units for families and to provide them with the opportunity to own their homes.”

Q: How can we prioritize to address everyone's needs?

“Seventy-five percent of our folks desire to live alone. How do you address that with affordable and accessible housing?”

“We must ensure that people actually have choice.”

“Choice is important, but not a one size fits all. There is no one right way.”

“I'm not sure what we can do. We have so many people with various housing needs.”

“Build community consensus around priorities.”

“Accessibility is not just sidewalks, but accessible transportation.”

“Person-centered focus and planning is so important. We need to listen to what we are hearing from individuals and their families.”

“This is one parent's perspective. Don't wait or count on the other systems to figure this out. Look at housing options and plan just like you would for any child.”



“How do we get landlords and property owners to house people with disabilities?”

Q: Do people with disabilities have access to housing choice vouchers?

“Our son has been on the ICF waiting list for nearly 20 years.”

“Not for the most part. The housing authority has greater flexibility than it exercises, and they can be creative in the services that they provide.”

“The housing authorities need to work collaboratively with other housing authorities.”

“The process is too tedious and turns landlords away. We need to figure out a way to make the process easy and appealing to landlords.”



“Most housing authority waiting lists are years long and closed. Some are being told that it’s 10 years until a name will come up.”

“No. Waiting lists continue to be the norm.”

“Not really.”

“Yes, but there are not enough vouchers available.”

“Local housing authorities are disorganized and don’t communicate effectively.”

Q: Who is missing in our community housing development efforts?

“As a parent, I don’t feel like I am part of the process.”

“I see more efforts for providing housing for people age 55 and over. But what is happening in the DD community?”

“The young adult and school-age populations reflect the growing numbers affected by autism. There is a wave coming, and we are not prepared when it comes to housing and transportation.”

“You have to build the housing around transportation.”

“Legislators need to understand these issues.”

“There seems to be a lack of coordination and communication across systems. DD housing organizations do not step up and become engaged with the local housing authorities and other housing programs within the counties. They have created a silo unto themselves.”



“We need to see more involvement in community planning and development efforts.”

“Developers don’t understand the extent to which housing for individuals with developmental disabilities is necessary and needed. And some do not have any interest.”

Q: Do we budget appropriately for housing?

“Funding for housing is such a complicated system.”

“One burden is the rising cost of utilities.”

“No!”

“Neglect by providers is costly.”

“There is no budget for making changes to existing housing for people with DD. The housing is aging and in need of additional supports.”

“We need to raise awareness about the need for housing.”

“We need to have a ‘go-to’ list for funding resources.”

“Budgets exist from the 1970s and aren’t current with inflation. Direct providers often struggle as much as consumers in making ends meet.”



“If we did budget appropriately, we wouldn’t be here.”

Q: What development opportunities are we missing?

“We should be leveraging across different groups.”

“We have done a poor job educating charitable foundations on housing problems.”

“Building working relationships and make the connections on a community level.”

“We are not bringing all parties to the table.”

“We don’t know what we don’t know.”

“We have to know what the rest of the community is doing about housing so we don’t miss out.”

“Let’s consider how technology could be better used to meet a person’s need in their current home or in a future home.”



“There is a lack of knowledge on how to utilize funding that is out there.”

“Networking - need to have relationships with the community partners or we miss opportunities. We must be active in nurturing and sustaining these relationships.”

Q: How do we gather necessary fiscal resources?

“Flog Congress. New housing vouchers are needed.”

“Are there other nonprofit housing developers in your area? How do you relate with them?”

“Brainstorm together with other housing organizations.”



“We need support from our state government.”

“Private grant donations.”

“Corporations should provide funding.”

“Organized volunteers could provide sweat equity labor.”

“Spend time networking and identifying the available resources.”

“Make housing a priority with county boards.”

“Look to other sources for funding. County levies are often at risk of not passing and commissioners are not increasing the amount of levies to reflect inflation.”

Q: What changes need to take place to meet the new rules?

“Make sure people coming out of institutions have a place to go.”

“We need a comprehensive investment in all of the aspects that go into the housing and care of the individual.”

“County boards will need to enforce freedom-of-choice rule in provider-controlled homes.”

“Increase person-centered planning within homes.”

“The Home Choice program needs to add independent skills training as a service for persons with disabilities.”



“There is a lack of basic bricks and mortar at affordable rates.”

“Respect right to choose, but the DD world has been turned upside down with this. I have a relative in a developmental center where he is doing well. I’m not sure she can live outside the center with the same quality of care.”

“We need to get consumers and families on board with the changes. They don’t necessarily recognize the need to change a system that has worked well for them for so long.”

Q: How do we plan to provide for more input by those affected by what we do?

“Hire more people with disabilities and create these opportunities.”

“Encourage individuals with disabilities to participate on boards, in public meetings, governmental meetings, etc. They need to voice their concerns and desires and influence the system, funders and developers.”



“Seek more input from people with DD who need housing.”

“County boards need to collaborate more with infrastructure issues and educate constituents.”

“Go out and ask them!”

“Develop a housing checklist that is completed by the consumer with the help from an ally, guardian or parent. Ask the kinds of questions a real estate agent would ask.”

“Work with local zoning boards to allow development.”

“Focus decisions at the local level.”

“Just ask!”

Q: Will these changes have an impact on our local services, levies, etc.?

“It’s all about perception. Everyone wants to know that people are well cared for and happy.”

“County boards are looking for ways to stay relevant in a changing system.”

“We’re going to see a negative impact on levies because county boards are giving up the services they once provided - schools, transportation, work, etc. The voters will no longer see that as part of the services provided by county boards.”

“Privatization of workshops is bringing about a lot of changes, and this may have a negative impact on levies.”



“Yes, will need to educate the public about a system that is changing, but services and supports are still being funded with local levy dollars.”

“Perhaps.”

“The image of county boards will change when they are no longer the direct service provider. The public may perceive that fewer levy dollars are needed to provide supports.”

“Yes. Changes will have an impact. Levies have been tied to services, schools and education.”

“Questions will be raised about what the levies are meant to do.”

Our opportunities are immense

The Community Housing Summit offered many creative options for communities to engage those in need with those who should be listening. The individuals responsible for developing affordable housing sat down in a room with those who are impacted by their decisions.

The result is encapsulated in this energetic script with heartfelt responses to the questions we posed.

We explored how we can become communities that include all, respond to the needs of all, and work collaboratively to redefine how we can be more open, accepting and embracing of all.

- How can housing be made more affordable for the economically challenged?
- How can we embrace Consolidated Planning as a way to include the needs of everyone and work collaboratively to address acceptance and inclusiveness?
- How can our limited financial resources be maximized to create inclusive, affordable, and accessible housing options in communities that embrace diversity?
- How can the DD community become more involved in local planning efforts to define needs and offer opportunities for becoming part of a community, rather than segregated within that community?

The future of housing development in Ohio is in the hands of those who participated in this venture. Let's utilize the lessons learned through our discussion to create more affordable, inclusive and accessible housing for everyone.

Derrick Dufresne,
President
CRA, Inc.

Bob Laux
President
Wild River Consulting Corp



Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council

899 East Broad Street, Suite 203, Columbus, OH 43205

www.ddc.ohio.gov | Telephone: 614-466-5205

Toll Free: 800-766-7426 | Fax: 614-466-0298

The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council is one of a national network of state councils, committed to self-determination and community inclusion for people with developmental disabilities.

The Council consists of at least 30 members appointed by the governor. Members are people with developmental disabilities, parents and guardians of people with developmental disabilities, representatives from state agencies, and representatives from nonprofit organizations and agencies that provide services to people with developmental disabilities.

One of the Council's goals is to educate and inform how state and local government services and policies can be improved, expanded or strengthened on behalf of people with disabilities.

*Funded by the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council under
the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act.*