



## Developmental Disabilities Services Division

### 2022 Housing Forums

#### Summary of Themes

The Developmental Disabilities Act of 1996 requires the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) to adopt a plan every three years that describes the nature, extent, and allocation of timing of services for people with developmental disabilities and their families. The process for updating Vermont's State System of Care Plan (SOCP) includes:

- Conducting a review of the regulations and SOCP for needed updates by considering experiences, input and feedback provided by multiple stakeholders since the last update, as well as new federal requirements.
- Facilitating robust public forums to present proposed changes and receive input and feedback from stakeholders. Stakeholder input and feedback is not limited to DDSD proposed changes. Any area of the SOCP can be discussed and considered.
- Presentation to and recommendations from the State Program Standing Committee for Developmental Disabilities Services.
- Targeted outreach to specific stakeholders such as Green Mountain Self-Advocates, Provider Agencies, Families & Guardians, Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council, and the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative (DDHI) group.
- Local System of Care Plans (this has been exempted due to the pandemic).
- On-line survey (in lieu of Local System of Care Plans) and written comments.

Over the course of 3 months, DDSD held 7 forums to obtain stakeholder feedback and input regarding SOCP changes. DDSD met with Provider Agencies/Vermont Care Partners, Members of the State Program Standing Committee, Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council, individuals and families, the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative, Vermont's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community, and Green Mountain Self-Advocates. In response to input from the State Program Standing Committee, advocates and families regarding the composition and structure of public forums, the State held specific targeted forums to create safe spaces for individuals to express their thoughts, make comments, and ask questions. The result is a collection of ideas and concerns from many different voices. Central themes emerged from the discussions and are summarized below.

- More housing options are needed for people with developmental disabilities.

- Individuals should have choice in where they want to live and who they want to live with.
- The need for a person-centered approach that involves the individual in decision making.
- Housing options that are safe, stable, affordable, and accessible.
- The need for increased awareness and acceptance of issues related to marriage, sexuality, and relationships for individuals with developmental disabilities.
- More attention to the restrictive practices in home settings such as denying access to food or food of choice, rights to privacy, allowing individuals to lock their rooms, etc.
- An individual's right to have friends visit or spend the night, including romantic partners.
- Addressing the workforce issue, including increasing wages for direct support workers.
- Using a "team" staffing approach versus a 1:1 staffing approach
- The Shared Living model is not for everyone; it does not guarantee permanency or stability.
- Advocacy for settings that accommodate varying degrees of need.
- Issues of privacy, tenancy rights, and the importance of having one's own space.
- Importance of connection and access to the community.
- The need for transportation to access the community, attend appointments, get to work
- Barriers to more diverse housing options includes workforce shortage, lack of resources, lack of Section 8 vouchers, Section 8 rules that prevent individuals who receive DS services from living together, other current rules and regulations, timeframes to make changes, rental agencies and landlords unwillingness/refusal to rent to people with disabilities, agencies willingness to subcontract, the impact and implications of the HCBS settings rule, as well as payment reform and conflict free case management.
- Concerns with the Shared Living model and how it can be detrimental to an individual's wellbeing when they must move, isolation and experience lack of oversight that can create unsafe situations, lack of training for shared living providers, lack of focus on skill building, the creation of inter-dependence of the Shared Living Provider, lack of skilled Shared Living Providers
- Advocacy and need for tenancy rights including having leases with the same protections as non-disabled people.
- Lack of innovation in the creation of new models that work for individuals with little or no communication, behavioral challenges, or significant medical needs.
- Concerns with the isolating nature and institutional-like features of intentional communities.
- Advocacy for Shared Living settings that focus on independent living skills and serve as a transition to independent or supported independent living.
- Advocacy for group home settings where people can live and interact with peers while receiving support from staff.

- Advocacy for small, stable housing communities, such as intentional and supportive housing communities. An example of this is “Visions for Creative Housing Solutions” in New Hampshire. Vision’s Lebanon location houses 11 people and has two buildings. Three individuals with higher needs reside in a main building where 24/7 support is provided. The second building houses 8 individuals in four 2-bedroom apartments.