Housing in a nutshell

Autism Housing Pathways

(Part of the Federation for Children with Special Needs)

Updated 2026

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The current situation in a nutshell

- Most people have to find or create housing
- To qualify for housing through DDS:
  - IQ of 70 or below, AND
  - Not healthy or safe in the family home
- Some private pay housing models exist (costs range from $1,000-$6K/month
- It is possible to cobble together housing with a combination of government supports and private funds – but the devil is in the (regulatory) details
- A more detailed explanation is at:
  - https://autismhousingpathways.org/the-current-housing-situation/ and
  - https://autismhousingpathways.org/thinking-about-housing-webinar-tuesday-march-17th/

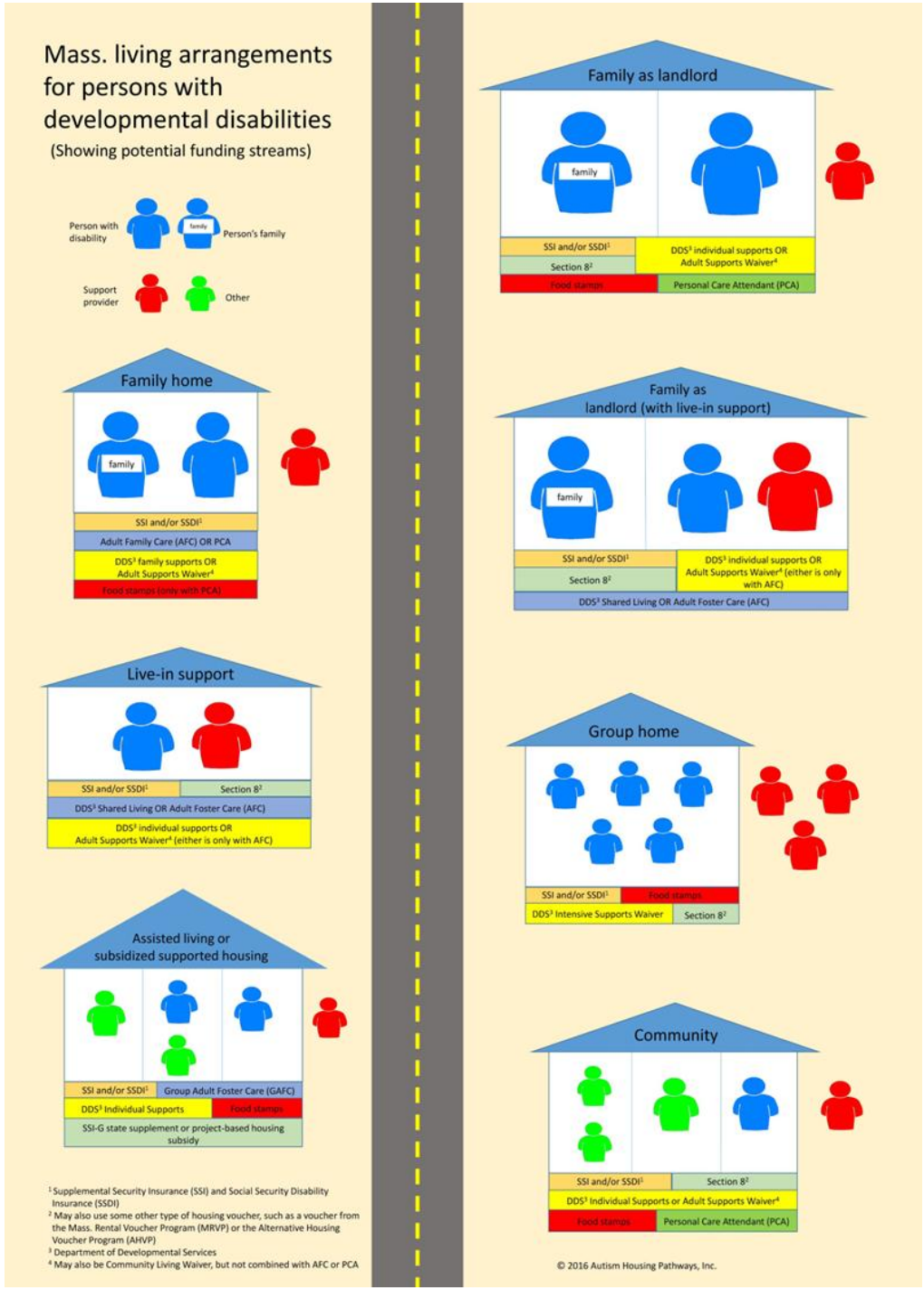
DDS gets to decide where its funds can be used

- 2014 policy is outlined at: https://autismhousingpathways.org/dds-issues-policy-on-residential-settings/
- Key features:
  - DDS will not "license, fund or support new residential development" with any of the following characteristics:
    - Settings that have limited, if any, interaction with the broader community;
    - Settings that use or authorize restrictions that are used in institutional settings;
    - Farmsteads or disability-specific farm community;
    - Gated or secured communities for people with disabilities;
    - Settings that are part of or adjacent to a residential school;
    - Multiple settings co-located and operationally-related that congregate a large number of people with disabilities for significant shared programming and staff; and
    - Multiple settings on a single site or in close proximity.
- Due to this policy, DDS funds cannot be used to pay for supports in some settings, including some of the private-pay models mentioned earlier.

7 possible housing models

- The family home: a non-custodial family member provides support, or support comes in periodically
- The family as landlord: the individual lives in an attached unit, with support than comes in periodically
- The family as landlord (with live-in support): the individual lives in an attached unit, with live-in support
- Live-in support: the individual lives in a separate unit, with live-in support. The unit may be owned or rented by the individual, the family, or the support provider.
- A group home: a number of people live in a small group residence, with support provided by hourly workers provided by the state or an agency. The home may be owned by families, the state, an agency, or a third-party landlord.
- Assisted living or subsidized supported housing: individuals may live in an assisted living facility or subsidized housing, with support that comes in periodically.
- Community: an individual lives in an apartment or home in the community, with support that comes in periodically.

https://autismhousingpathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/infographic2gray.pdf



2016 MA Housing Think Tank

- Analyzed a broad range of housing models that were compatible with the DDS policy
- Participants identified a subset of models likely to meet the needs of the broadest range of people, as well as some for those with highly specialized needs
- Since the think tank, AHP has considered some additional models
- All these models can be fit into a typology based on the 6 of the 7 models previously discussed (the family home is omitted)

Typology of possible housing models

Key:

Gray (selected by think tank)

Green (added since think tank)

Yellow (considered by think tank

The family as landlord	The family as landlord (with live-in support)	Live-in support	Group home	Assisted living or subsidized supported housing	Community
(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	Individual apartments	Individual apartments
(empty cell)	Shared Living	Shared Living	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)
Co-housing	Co-housing	Co-housing	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	Co-housing
(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	Inclusive, small footprint units	Inclusive, small footprint units
(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	Transitional housing	Transitional housing
(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	Licensed congregate	(empty cell)	(empty cell)
(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	Intensive medical/behavioral supports	(empty cell)	(empty cell)
(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	Cass Housing
Small, legal multi-unit	Small, legal multi-unit	Small, legal multi-unit	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)
(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	Intergenerational (co-located with senior apts.)	Intergenerational	Intergenerational
Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural	(empty cell)	(empty cell)
Autism-friendly design	Autism-friendly design	Autism-friendly design	Autism-friendly design	Autism-friendly design	Autism-friendly design
Smart home	Smart home	Smart home	Smart home	Smart home	Smart home
(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	(empty cell)	Large inclusive multi-unit housing	Large inclusive multi-unit housing

Next steps

- Participate in breakout discussions of individual housing models in this regular housing meetup group
- Join the io group at https://groups.io/g/AHP-housing-meetup
  - Complete a profile sheet and we'll upload it to the files section
- Go through the AHP housing bootcamp steps: https://autismhousingpathways.org/housing-bootcamp/
  - Those who complete "Learning about housing" can join an io group for course alumni who share the same in-depth knowledge
- Find your peeps!

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