

Community Integration for People with Disabilities: Key Principles

General Principles

- Individuals with disabilities should have the opportunity to live like people without disabilities. They should have the opportunity to be employed, have a place to call home, and be engaged in the community with family and friends.
- Individuals with disabilities should have control over their own day, including which job or educational or leisure activities they pursue.
- Individuals with disabilities should have control over where and how they live, including the opportunity to live in their own apartment or home. Living situations that require conformity to a collective schedule or that restrict personal activities limit the right to choose.

Employment

- Individuals with disabilities should have the opportunity to be employed in non-segregated, regular workplaces. Virtually all individuals with disabilities can be employed and earn the same wages as people without disabilities. When needed for such employment, they should have access to supported or customized employment. They should be afforded options other than sheltered work, day treatment, clubhouses, and other segregated programs.

Housing

- Virtually all individuals with disabilities can live in their own home with supports. Like people without disabilities, they should get to decide where they live, with whom they live, when and what they eat, who visits and when, etc.
- To this end, individuals with disabilities should have access to housing other than group homes, other congregate arrangements, and multi-unit buildings or complexes that are primarily for people with disabilities. They should have access to “scattered site” housing, with ownership or control of a lease. Housing should not be conditioned on compliance with treatment or with a service plan.

Choice

- Individuals with disabilities should have the opportunity to make informed choices. They must have full and accurate information about their options, including what services and financial support are available in integrated settings. They should have the opportunity to visit integrated settings and talk to individuals with similar disabilities working and living in integrated settings. Their concerns about integrated settings should be explored and addressed.

Public Funding

- Government funding for services should support implementation of these principles. Currently, public funding has a bias toward institutionalization, forcing individuals to overcome myriad barriers if they wish to age in place and remain in their communities.

These community integration principles are embraced by:

ADAPT

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Diabetes Association

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

The Arc of the United States

Autistic Self-Advocacy Network

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Easter Seals

Little People of America

Mental Health America

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of Rights Protection and Advocacy

National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery

National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare

National Council on Independent Living

National Disability Rights Network

National Federation of the Blind

National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse

National Organization on Disability

Paralyzed Veterans of America

TASH

United Spinal Association