

# Tips When Considering Housing and Services

When you consider your young adult's future life, where they live is important. It's crucial that you talk with your young adult about their vision for housing and independent living, so you can support their needs and desires.

Every young adult has different abilities and needs, and some parents will need to be more involved in this process than others. Many housing options and supports involve eligibility criteria, timelines, waiting lists, and limited availability to obtain services. Planning early for housing leads to better outcomes.



## **Tip #1: Shift your thinking and put your young adult in the driver's seat**

Parents are usually the primary decision makers for their children. Now is a good time to see your young adult as part of the larger community and put them in the driver's seat so they are at the center of the planning process. This is called "person-centered" thinking and planning, which is a process driven by the unique likes and dislikes of the person involved and their family.

Person-centered planning uses a set of written and visual tools to assist your young adult's team to define a vision for how they want to live a meaningful, self-directed life. The following questions encourage person-centered thinking:

- What are your young adult's unique hopes and dreams?
- What are their favorite places, activities, and people?
- What rituals and routines provide them with consistency, comfort, and happiness?
- What is necessary for their health and safety?
- What do people need to know and do to best support them?

## Tip #2: Assess your young adult's support needs

You will need to help determine your young adult's ability to live in a home of his or her own. This information is key when you work with outside agencies to determine the level of support services that will be required for your child to live as independently as possible outside the family home. Consider the following:

- How much daily assistance does your young adult require? Can they dress, bathe, cook, and organize their day on their own, with some assistance, or with complete assistance? For example, do they need assistance with shopping, managing their finances, or medication management?
- Does your young adult need help with behavior, communication, or to stay on task?



## Tip #3: Talk to your young adult about where they want to live

Does your young adult prefer to live close to family and friends in familiar surroundings? For some, the relationships they have in their communities are very important and those close to your young adult may serve as “natural” (unpaid) supports. Family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, teachers, and members of your faith or cultural community, have shared experiences and memories for your son or daughter and may provide a sense of “home.” This isn't true for everyone. Some young adults thrive on change, and moving away from the family home and community is important for them to foster a sense of independence. They may prioritize living near favorite places, activities, friends, and transportation.

## Tip #4: Explore housing options with your young adult

Discuss the differences between available types of housing, and ask your young adult what options appeal to them. At the same time, be realistic about housing costs. Can your young adult or your family afford to purchase a home? Is there an option to rent from a family member? Will your young adult need to have a roommate to share expenses?

Other things to consider are your young adult's physical space needs, accessibility, and the availability of housing in their preferred location.

## **Tip #5: Consider how your young adult will pay for housing and services**

How will your young adult personal needs, food, and rent or a mortgage? Are they currently working, or do they have job experiences through school programs or volunteering that can lead to employment? Having a disability does not automatically qualify your young adult for funding for housing and services; they must meet eligibility criteria set by federal and state government. There are two categories of funding assistance for housing and services: Funding for the “shelter” or “housing option,” and funding for “supports” or “services.” Funding sources include government benefit programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medical Assistance (MA), and state and county social services programs.



## **Tip #6: Talk to your young adult about considering a roommate**

Due to rising rental costs and the limited availability of affordable housing, your young adult may need to consider sharing expenses with a roommate. Some young adults prefer to have a roommate; others would like to live alone. If your young adult is considering a roommate, they should think about whether they have a friend or acquaintance who might be compatible. Talk to your young adult about what is important to them when considering a roommate: The potential roommate’s interests and hobbies, sensory and environmental issues such as noise or allergies, daily sleeping habits, and cleanliness are important discussion topics.

## **Tip #7: Network to expand your young adult’s community connections**

Community connections are important and can build natural supports your young adult will need. When you think about how to connect them to the community, consider their hobbies and interests, places they enjoy visiting, and volunteer activities they are involved in.

## **Tip #8: Assess your young adult’s need for direct support staff**

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) play a vital role in your young adult’s life by helping with a wide range of daily activities and interactions with friends, employment, healthcare and physical care, skill development, and more. DSPs also help facilitate connections to people, resources, and experiences. In considering a DSP, identify personal compatibility and the supports your young adult wants and needs. Key skills, personality traits, culture, and language ability may be important considerations.

## **Tip #9: Explore your young adult's transportation needs**

Reliable, cost-effective, accessible transportation that provides your young adult with the freedom to go where they want, when they want, is important. It allows them to participate in the community and have access to employment, housing, education, and social connections. For some young adults, this means convenient public transportation. If your young adult is able to drive, consider whether or not they can afford to purchase and maintain a car.

## **Tip #10: Begin to research housing and services resources, attend workshops and events**

To learn about housing and services in your area, you can research online resources available from state and local human services departments, advocacy organizations, and disability resource and referral organizations. A great way to start is by visiting PACER's Housing Project at [PACER.org/housing](https://PACER.org/housing). Attend relevant workshops and events, and network with other parents and young adults exploring housing options and services. Once you have identified important person-centered needs for your young adult, you'll be able to create a one-page profile that can serve as a guide when you speak to housing professionals.

By planning and learning as much as possible about housing and services, resources, and options ahead of time, you will have a greater chance of achieving your young adult's vision for independent living.

*For more information, visit PACER's Housing Project at: [PACER.org/housing](https://PACER.org/housing).*

