

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE IN MY OWN PLACE?



A Guide to Independent Living for People  
with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

MAKING  
POLICY  
PUBLIC

Independent living is about making my own choices about where to live and how to best live my life safely and responsibly. It comes with rights and responsibilities that are different from other living situations.

# I HAVE <sup>THE</sup> RIGHT TO CHOOSE:

## Where I want to live.



I can choose what neighborhood I want to live in. I can choose what kind of home I want to live in – within my price range – like an apartment or a house.

## Who I interact with.



Living in my own place doesn't mean that I'll be living alone! I choose who I want to support me and how much help I'll need. I can choose to live alone or with roommates, who can visit me, and when I want to see my friends and family.

## How to live my life.



I choose my own hobbies and schedule. I work with my staff to decide what activities I need help with and what things I can do myself, like housekeeping, planning meals, and paying bills.

# BUT I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS...

What is an intellectual/developmental disability?

An intellectual/developmental disability is defined as a severe and chronic disability that began before a person's 22nd birthday, is expected to continue indefinitely, and substantially restricts their functioning in several major life activities.

Will I be totally on my own?

No, I'll still have the support of my family, friends, and staff. We'll make a plan to deal with emergencies.

How long will it take to live in my own place?

It can take a long time! So it's important to get started early.

What's the difference between living in my own place and living in a group home?

In a group home I may live with one person or more and some decisions need to be made collectively. A group home will be staffed based on the support needs of the people who live there. When I live in my own place, I can make more decisions about how to live my life, but I also have more responsibilities.

Can I live in my own place?

Maybe, if I really want to! But it will take a lot of planning.

If I do everything right and complete the planning process, am I guaranteed a place of my own?

Not necessarily. Living independently doesn't work for everyone and it might not work out for me.

Is living in my own place more expensive?

Not necessarily! There are funding sources to help me.

I need help doing a lot of things at home, like cooking and cleaning. Does that mean I can't have my own place?

Not necessarily. It depends on what supports I need and what supports are available.

Can I still go to activities with my friends at my old group home?

I can still make plans to hang out with my friends, but I have to ask the staff of my old group home if I can go to a planned activity.



I can use this poster to identify what kind of things I like, what kind of supports I'll need, how they will be paid for, and who will be there to help me plan. My support staff and I will start a process called Person-Centered Planning.

# HOW DO I GET READY TO LIVE IN MY OWN PLACE?

**Forming my Circle of Support**

My Circle of Support is the group of my closest friends, family, and staff who will help me live in my own place. Living in my own place doesn't mean I'll be doing it alone! They will be there whenever I need support.

Together, we'll use this poster to come up with roles: each member of my circle will play a significant supporting role in my life.

For example, one of them may be my best friend, while another member may help me learn about my neighborhood.

**MY FRIENDS** \_\_\_\_\_

**MY FAMILY** \_\_\_\_\_

**MY NEIGHBORS** \_\_\_\_\_

**MY MSC** \_\_\_\_\_

Staff and supports like my Medicaid Services Coordinator (MSC), therapists, Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), or members of organizations like the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State (SANYSS)

**MY BROKER** \_\_\_\_\_

**MY DOCTOR** \_\_\_\_\_

**MY STAFF** \_\_\_\_\_



## Telling my story



I'll work with my Circle of Support to tell my story: my abilities, preferences, relationships, and any other information that may be included in my Person-Centered Plan. Here are some things I can start thinking about:

Hi! My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

My hobbies include \_\_\_\_\_.

When I get my own place, I want to live near \_\_\_\_\_.

Now, I live in a neighborhood called \_\_\_\_\_.

I'd like to move to \_\_\_\_\_.

The things I don't like about where I live now are \_\_\_\_\_.

My family members' names are \_\_\_\_\_.

My close friends' names are \_\_\_\_\_.

I make \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per year, \$ \_\_\_\_\_ from my benefits, and \$ \_\_\_\_\_ from other sources.

In order for me to live safely in my own place I need \_\_\_\_\_.

## Creating my timeline

Based on my story and with the help of my Circle of Support, I'll work to figure out a timeline that includes the supports and services I need, and plan for the costs of setting up and keeping my new home.



### MY GOAL

To live in my own apartment.

With the help of my Circle of Support, I'll figure out a timeline to do that.



★ IN 1 Year, I'LL HAVE: \_\_\_\_\_.

👏 WHO WILL HELP ME DO THIS: \_\_\_\_\_.

★ IN 6 Months, I'LL HAVE: \_\_\_\_\_.

👏 WHO WILL HELP ME DO THIS: \_\_\_\_\_.

★ IN 3 Months, I'LL HAVE: \_\_\_\_\_.

👏 WHO WILL HELP ME DO THIS: \_\_\_\_\_.



## What are the different options to pay for living in my own place?

There are different ways to pay for the cost of life in my new home and I have the right to choose which options are best for me. I will need help from a Medicaid Service Coordinator (MSC) to get started with any of the options and programs below.

### SELF-DIRECTION

Self-Direction offers me the opportunity to identify and self-direct supports and services. I will identify the supports I need, select my own staff and community resources, and manage (with support) my own budget.

### INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES (ISS)

ISS is a subsidy to help me pay my rent. It's based on my income and the cost of my home. It can also be used to pay for things like security deposits, first month's rent, or furniture.

### HOME OF YOUR OWN (HOYO)

This is a program that's open to me and my parents or legal guardians if we want to buy a home. The program helps with things like information on low-interest mortgages, as well as homeownership counseling and training programs.

### PEOPLE EMBRACING PEOPLE (PEP)

PEP allows you to move in with a caregiver who will also provide support. A caregiver can be a friend, a distant relative, or someone you meet through a placement program run by the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).



## Here are some programs that can help me once I am living in my own place:

Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waiver Assistive Technology can help me pay for needed modifications to my home, like communication aids, controls, appliances, or supplies I'll need to live safely in my home.

Environmental Modifications (E-MODS) are changes to the physical environment in your home, like ramps, door-widening, and roll-in showers.

Community Habilitation Services and Supported Employment Services are services that I can get through OPWDD to help me be an active member in my community. These services can help me with things like developing skills to live independently, such as housekeeping, commuting, budgeting, and job training. I can talk to my MSC about them.





# After reading this guide, I'm feeling ready to take the next step! Where can I begin?



I can begin by contacting my local OPWDD Developmental Disabilities Regional Office (DDRO). They will determine if I am eligible to receive services and supports. I can either go to their website or call them to find out who my local OPWDD eligibility coordinator is. [www.opwdd.ny.gov](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov) • 1-866-946-9733

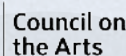
## I CAN ALSO GET HELP FROM THESE ORGANIZATIONS:

Self-Advocacy Association of New York State

I can ask them to connect me to my local Self-Advocacy Group. [www.sanys.org](http://www.sanys.org) • 518-382-1454

Parent to Parent of New York State

I can ask them to connect me and my family to our local Parent to Parent Group. [www.p2pusa.org](http://www.p2pusa.org) • 1-800-305-8817



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**MAKING POLICY PUBLIC** is a program of the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP). CUP partners with policy advocates and graphic designers to produce foldout posters that explain complicated policy issues like this one. [makingpolicypublic.net](http://makingpolicypublic.net)

**CUP:** Christine Gaspar, Oscar Nuñez  
**AHRC-NYC:** Carole Gothelf, Nick Legowski, Jennifer Teich  
**DESIGN:** Second Marriage

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