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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
COLLABORATIVE, INC. (TAC)
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CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES
(CCD) HOUSING TASK FORCE

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Government housing officials and affordable housing providers have made little effort to acknowledge or address the extreme housing crisis confronting people with disabilities.

Affordable Housing System Fails People with Disabilities

Being a part of the community and living as independently as possible are among the most important values and goals shared by people with disabilities, their families, and advocates. A home of one's own – either rented or owned – is the cornerstone of independence for people with disabilities. When a person with a disability has a decent, safe, and affordable home, then he or she has the opportunity to become a part of and thrive in the community. With stable housing, one can achieve other important life goals, including education, job training, and employment. Unfortunately, millions of people with disabilities today stand little chance of obtaining decent and affordable housing.

With housing costs increasing at rates higher than inflation and cost of living adjustments, people with disabilities risk losing their housing, not being able to locate housing in the first place, or foregoing other essentials such as food to pay for their housing. A 1999 report titled *Priced Out in 1998: The Housing Crisis For People with Disabilities*, published by TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force, documented that people with disabilities receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits cannot afford to rent decent housing in any housing market in the United States without some type of government assistance. Despite this need, government housing officials and affordable housing providers have made little effort to acknowledge or address the extreme housing crisis confronting people with disabilities.

Why has the affordable housing system failed to meet the housing needs of people with disabilities? Why are people with disabilities not accessing the array of affordable housing programs available? In an effort to try to answer these questions, in 1998 and 1999 TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force undertook a study that included three separate national housing surveys. These surveys were part of an overall effort to:

- more accurately assess the performance of the nation's affordable housing system;
- measure the housing capacity of the disability community; and
- document the level of support the disability community receives from the affordable housing system.

TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force distributed these surveys to community-based disability organizations, disability homeownership coalitions, and Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) in order to gain a better understanding of the obstacles to creating affordable housing for people with disabilities. The surveys were specifically designed to measure the apparent lack of response from the affordable housing system to the needs of people with disabilities. Using this information, disability housing advocates can begin to advocate for:



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Opening Doors

A housing publication for the disability community

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The Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. is a non-profit organization that provides state-of-the-art technical assistance and training to housing and human service organizations so that they may achieve positive outcomes in their work on behalf of people who are disadvantaged and/or disabled. For more information, please contact Emily Miller, Marie Herb, or Ann O'Hara, Technical Assistance Collaborative Inc., One Center Plaza, Suite 310, Boston, Massachusetts 02108. Phone: 617-742-5657 or Fax: 617-742-0509 or e-mail: info@tacinc.org.



The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) is a national coalition of consumer, advocacy, provider, and professional organizations who advocate on behalf of people of all ages with disabilities and their families. CCD has created the CCD Housing Task Force to focus specifically on housing issues that affect people with disabilities.

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FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of *Opening Doors* focuses on the troubling findings of three recent surveys completed by TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force – findings which confirm and document the continuing failure of the nation's affordable housing system to help people with disabilities. For most readers of this publication, this information is neither new nor surprising.

For years, disability housing advocates have struggled with little success to convince government housing funders and housing providers that the housing needs of people with disabilities are being overlooked. Now, through these surveys, we have begun the process of documenting the extent of the problem.

On a case-by-case basis, it can be difficult to convince Congress and federal housing officials that there are serious problems with affordable housing decision making and housing policies in states and local communities. However advocates working every day in local communities know first hand how housing officials and housing providers can ignore the disability community's housing needs. Every day, there are new bureaucratic roadblocks, procedural barriers, and blatant discrimination which stand in the way of people with disabilities' participation in government housing programs.

More importantly, there is a troubling lack of leadership from government officials to identify people with disabilities as a group with high priority housing needs. During the past decade we have seen many innovations in government housing policies which benefit other groups, including new assisted living developments for elderly households, new mixed income public housing for working families, and incentives to link housing resources like Section 8 to Welfare to Work programs.

This situation simply must not continue! It is time for the disability community to take action and ensure that people with disabilities receive their "fair share" of all affordable housing that is created – both at the federal government level through the HUD budget appropriations process, and at the state and local level where critical housing decisions are made and implemented.

We encourage you to make *Opening Doors* available to your members and constituents. All past issues are available on the *Opening Doors* web site at www.c-c-d.org/doors.html.

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- a more pro-active response from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the affordable housing system; and
- a stronger role in housing programs for disability organizations.

This issue of *Opening Doors* highlights the key findings from the study and discusses how the affordable housing system has failed the disability community. It also offers suggestions on how to build the capacity of the non-profit disability community to increase the supply of decent, safe, affordable, and accessible housing for people with disabilities.

Survey Findings

The TAC/CCD Housing Task Force surveys found that the affordable housing system has failed to help people with disabilities. In general, the surveys found that:

1. State and local housing officials do not make the housing needs of people with disabilities a high priority;
2. Most PHAs are not seeking available resources to expand housing opportunities for people with disabilities; and
3. When given the opportunity, non-profit disability organizations are very successful at expanding affordable housing opportunities for people with disabilities. However, this opportunity is often hard to come by because the affordable housing system controls most of the available funding resources and has not learned how to partner successfully with the disability community.

Findings Presented to Congress

TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force immediately took action with the results of the surveys. The data was compiled in a draft report titled *A Failing Grade: A Report Card on the Affordable Housing System's Response to the Needs of People with Disabilities*. Information in the report is intended to: 1) educate lawmakers on the obstacles people with disabilities face in

Information in *A Failing Grade* was made possible through funding from both the Fannie Mae Corporation and Melville Charitable Trust. A draft copy of *A Failing Grade* is currently only available on the web at www.tacinc.org.

accessing affordable housing; 2) urge increased funding to expand opportunities; and 3) encourage revisions to certain funding programs to make them more useful by disability organizations in developing housing.

On April 13, 2000, members of the CCD Housing Task Force used *A Failing Grade* as the basis for testimony presented before a VA/HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations subcommittee hearing in the US House of Representatives. Copies of *A Failing Grade* were distributed at the hearing to inform federal lawmakers of the importance of making housing for people with disabilities a priority.

The Housing Crisis at a Glance

During the past decade the housing problems confronting low-income people have worsened. For people with disabilities, the lack of affordable housing has grown to crisis proportions. A 1998 study by HUD reported that the stock of rental housing affordable to low-income families is shrinking. Between 1993 and 1995 there was a loss of 900,000 rental units affordable to very low-income families, a reduction of nine percent. There was an even greater reduction – 16 percent – in the number of units affordable for extremely low-income renters.

Now, in 2000, with increasingly tight housing markets and the rising costs of rents, it is virtually impossible for a low-income person with a disability to afford a modest apartment without government assistance. Nationwide, the income of a person with a disability receiving SSI benefits is only 24.4 percent of the average one-person income. At this income level a person with a disability receiving SSI must spend approximately 69 percent of his or her income to rent a modest one-bedroom apartment.

To make matters worse, during the past decade, the federal housing budget has also changed dramatically. Federal funding for housing – which has always been competitive – has become much more difficult to obtain as HUD’s budget was slashed. The Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program – the only HUD program targeted to people with disabilities – was cut by 50 percent in 1995.

Not only have available resources declined, but access by people with disabilities to existing affordable housing has been reduced as well. Since 1992, federal government policy has intentionally reduced the number of federally subsidized apartments available to people with

disabilities under age 62 by permitting federally subsidized housing providers to implement “elderly only” housing policies. Once these housing developments are designated “elderly only,” non-elderly people with disabilities are no longer eligible to move in, or are only eligible for a small set-aside of units in each project. In practice, when there is a small set-aside of units available for non-elderly people with disabilities, they are sometimes only offered to people with physical disabilities. These cuts in funding and reduced access to units and the explosive real estate market have created a housing crisis in most communities for people with disabilities.

In 1999, the United States Supreme Court’s decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* affirmed the rights of people with disabilities to live in communities of their choice, rather than in restrictive institutional settings. Yet there is no decent affordable housing available for people with disabilities in most communities across the country. Paradoxically, as the need – and desire – for housing for people with disabilities has increased, the money available to address this housing crisis has become even harder to obtain.

Three Surveys

As part of their federal housing policy work, TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force conducted three separate national housing surveys in 1998 and 1999. The surveys were each designed to explore the level of involvement of the affordable housing system in expanding housing opportunities for people with disabilities and to evaluate the knowledge, capacity, and level of participation among non-profit disability organizations. Through these surveys TAC and CCD also wanted to evaluate 1) whether the disability community could fill some of the void

Not only have available resources declined, but access by people with disabilities to existing affordable housing has been reduced as well.

created by the affordable housing system; and 2) how disability housing advocates could encourage the affordable housing system to be more proactive and responsive.

In addition to the surveys, TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force also analyzed recent HUD program evaluations and the outcomes associated with TAC's technical assistance to organizations in the disability community. This information helped to provide a better understanding of the role non-profit disability organizations can play in addressing affordable housing needs.

As part of this study, TAC surveyed:

1. All PHAs that administer Section 8 vouchers. Approximately 600 PHAs completed and returned the survey;
2. 96 non-profit disability organizations that are CCD Housing Task Force members and affiliates regarding their experience trying to access the affordable housing system; and
3. 38 members and affiliates of Fannie Mae HomeChoice and Home of Your Own homeownership coalitions from 23 states.

The information obtained through these surveys provided TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force with a clearer understanding of the road blocks faced by people with disabilities in accessing resources and gaining support from the affordable housing system.

Major Findings

The major finding of all three surveys is that the affordable housing system has failed to help people with disabilities. Specifically, the survey data indicate that:

- only 10 percent of state and local housing officials, 18 percent of PHAs, and 26 percent of state and local housing finance agencies have made

housing for people with disabilities a “high” priority for funding in their communities;

- over 45 percent of PHAs were unaware of the various new Section 8 funding opportunities targeted to people with disabilities which they were eligible to administer;
- only 10 percent of PHAs across the nation apply each year for these new Section 8 vouchers for people with disabilities; and
- thousands of Section 8 vouchers given to PHAs for people with disabilities are still not being used because PHAs are unable to assist people with disabilities who need housing to access the vouchers and locate housing.

Finding #1: Performance of Government Housing Officials

During the 1990s, in an effort to give more planning and administrative responsibility to local communities, decisions about who actually benefits from these limited HUD resources have been turned over to housing officials, who *rarely* utilize them to increase housing opportunities for people with disabilities. The survey responses – which were submitted by 96 CCD Housing Task Force members and affiliates – document that local and state housing officials who control billions of housing dollars are either unaware of, or not concerned about, the housing needs and housing crisis confronting people with disabilities.

By not making housing for people with disabilities a priority, existing resources are not made available; new resources are not sought; and an overall climate of “do nothing” is perpetuated. As the data indicate, the overwhelming majority of players in the affordable housing system do not make housing for people with disabilities a “high priority” in their

community. In some communities, housing for people with disabilities is not even recognized by housing officials at all.

In fact, some affordable housing agencies still think that disability service providers – not the affordable housing system – should pay for housing for people with disabilities. Many affordable housing officials and housing providers do not understand that recent innovations in Medicaid and other support service funding streams mean that many people with disabilities no longer are forced to live in structured residential settings. These new policies mean that there is an increasing number of people with disabilities looking for affordable housing in the community.

Finding #2: Performance of PHAs

Since 1997, over 40,000 new Section 8 vouchers have been appropriated by Congress specifically targeted to people with disabilities. These new Section 8 opportunities were the result of years of advocacy at the federal government level by the disability community to address the tremendous affordability crisis people with disabilities face.

However, less than half of the PHAs that responded to the survey questionnaire knew that these funding opportunities were available. From 1997-1999 only 10 percent of PHAs each year have tried to access these rental vouchers for people with disabilities in their communities. In many areas, non-profit disability organizations have tried to partner with the PHAs in order to access more Section 8 vouchers. Many have found the PHA disinterested or unwilling to collaborate on an application to HUD for Section 8 vouchers.

According to the TAC/CCD Housing Task Force surveys, one reason for the PHAs' lack of response is that they were unaware of the housing needs of people with disabilities in their communities. Other PHAs were reluctant to tackle the

bureaucratic requirements of a targeted Section 8 program. One quarter of those responding said they lacked the capacity to administer the Section 8 vouchers for people with disabilities who may need extra help to use the vouchers. Specifically, the PHAs cited activities such as housing search assistance, utilizing fair housing laws, and making reasonable accommodations as areas where they are weak.

All the reasons given by PHAs for not seeking new Section 8 vouchers support the need for the non-profit disability community to play a more active role in the affordable housing system. In response to these PHAs' problems, in 1999 and 2000, Congress directed HUD to make a small set aside of Section 8 vouchers – funded from the Section 811 program – available to non-profit disability organizations as well as to PHAs. Despite the fact that HUD provided no advance notice of this change, over 100 disability organizations applied for the Section 8 vouchers in 1999. Data from the 2000 application process that ended on July 18th is not yet available.

Finding #3: Performance of Non-profits

Another key finding of the surveys is that when given the opportunity, non-profit disability organizations are very successful at expanding affordable housing for people with disabilities.

Many non-profit disability organizations have excelled at helping people with disabilities access and maintain housing. They have created housing through HUD's Section 811 program and the McKinney Shelter Plus Care and Supportive Housing programs. To do so, they have learned how to speak "housing language" which has its own acronyms and vocabulary. They have also had to navigate through the bureaucratic maze of HUD and other government housing agencies. These organizations have demonstrated that

The overwhelming majority of players in the affordable housing system do not make housing for people with disabilities a "high priority" in their community.

Non-Profit Disability Organizations that Received Section 8 Mainstream Funds in 1999		
		SUBSIDIES
LA	Community Support Programs, Inc.	58
FL	Boley Center	75
MD	Arc of Chesapeake	75
MA	Bridge of Central MA	35
MO	Community Housing Network	75
NM	Barrier Free Futures	20
NY	Mercy Haven	75
NY	NY Society for the Deaf	75
NY	Southern Tier Environment for Living	25
OH	PVA Circle of Homes	75
PA	Resource for Human Development	25
RI	Gateway Health Care	75
RI	Kent County Mental Health	75
VA	Piedmont Housing Alliance	75

with sufficient knowledge and capacity, disability organizations can expand access to affordable housing.

HUD data also confirms the ability and expertise of the disability community in managing housing programs for people with disabilities. A 1995 HUD evaluation of the Section 811 program found that a key strength of the program is the expertise of the non-profit disability organizations responsible for program administration. HUD’s study found that these disability organizations understand the service and housing needs of people with disabilities while at the same time working to ensure their maximum independence. Specifically, the HUD study reported that:

- non-profit disability organizations excel at helping people with disabilities access and keep housing;
- tenants who live in housing administered by non-profit disability organizations are highly satisfied; and
- non-profit disability organizations are effective at implementing supportive housing programs quickly and efficiently.

The study concluded that HUD should rely on these highly capable sponsors in the administration of housing for people with disabilities.

In addition to successfully administering the Section 811 program, McKinney Shelter Plus Care, and Supportive Housing programs, non-profit disability organizations have demonstrated their success working with the Section 8 program as well. As mentioned previously, in 1999 Congress allowed non-profit disability organizations to apply for new Section 8 vouchers for people with disabilities to compensate for past poor performance of PHAs in accessing this funding. Over 100 disability organizations applied and had to compete with PHAs for this funding through a lottery process. Of those that applied, 14 disability organizations were successful in obtaining almost 800 vouchers – half of the total available. These 14 disability organizations, listed above, must now adhere to the requirements of PHAs and in essence become PHAs themselves.

These non-profit disability organizations were able to overcome the obstacles the PHAs cited for not-applying, including: 1) providing good data on need; 2) demonstrating capacity to complete bureaucratic and administrative requirements of the program; and 3) capacity to provide necessary services to help people get and keep housing. In addition, these non-profits had one thing most PHAs did not – the desire to help people with disabilities obtain affordable housing.

The non-profit administration of these Section 8 vouchers is an important change in federal housing policy and should be expanded. As a result of this change, many people with disabilities will not be required to navigate the intimidating and unfriendly bureaucracy of a PHA, and will, instead, receive the assistance they need from local disability organizations to locate housing in the community that meets their needs.

With sufficient knowledge and capacity, disability organizations can expand access to affordable housing.

One Successful Partnership

When the affordable housing system does not reach out to the disability community, people with disabilities are the ones who lose out. Conversely, when PHAs collaborate with the non-profit disability community, people with disabilities are able to find and keep affordable housing.

One PHA in the Midwest received an allocation of Section 8 vouchers for people with disabilities but was not demonstrating success in using the vouchers. Over 100 Section 8 vouchers for people with disabilities remained unused. A major problem was that the PHA had a very old and outdated Section 8 waiting list and wasn't able to locate many people with disabilities who were still eligible for the Section 8 vouchers. After so-called "outreach" efforts to people on its outdated waiting list, the PHA did nothing with the remaining vouchers.

By chance, the PHA mentioned this situation at a meeting, which was also attended by a staff person from a local non-profit disability organization. The non-profit disability organization approached the PHA about ways they could partner with the PHA and help the PHA use these vouchers.

The non-profit disability organization conducted outreach to clients who were living in apartments but paying over 50 percent of their income for rent. The group also conducted outreach to non-housed clients and helped them with the application process and with the difficult housing search process.

The disability organization was also able to work with tenants to determine what supports and services they would need to maintain their housing. As a result of this collaboration, people with disabilities were able to access affordable housing and the PHA was able to use its vouchers and demonstrate a successful program.

By not working together, the affordable housing system is not able to capitalize on the strength and expertise of the disability community.

Other Survey Findings

It is clear from the survey data that the affordable housing system has not yet learned how to partner with the disability community. Unfortunately, housing information and technical assistance is not always easily available to the non-profit disability community and is generally not forthcoming from state and local housing officials. This lack of basic understandable information is compelling evidence that the affordable housing community has not yet learned how to reach out and successfully partner with the disability community.

For example, the study found that:

- only 23 percent of CCD members and affiliates had participated in the HUD-mandated Consolidated Plan process managed by states and local housing officials; and
- only 19 percent of PHAs surveyed stated that they had a dialogue with the disability community regarding the new Section 8 funding opportunities for people with disabilities.

Most disability organizations do not have enough knowledge of federal housing programs and policies or how they can be used systemically to expand housing for people with disabilities. The TAC/CCD study found that most housing developers and funders have not reached out to the disability community. As a result, the disability community is not actively involved in key affordable housing planning activities like the Consolidated Plan and the Public Housing Agency Plan (see the September 1999 edition of *Opening Doors* for a discussion about these plans). When the disability community is not involved in housing planning activities, the cycle of not being able to access affordable housing resources is perpetuated. In addition, by not working together, the affordable housing system is not able to capitalize on the strength and expertise of the disability community.

Fortunately, TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force have found that through direct housing technical assistance and training, non-profit disability organizations are able to develop their housing capacity and establish more effective partnerships with the affordable housing system. By working with a technical assistance provider who understands both housing and disability

issues, non-profit disability organizations are able to bridge the gap the affordable housing community has created.

Next Steps

TAC and CCD Recommendations

The study results document that government housing officials still lack the desire and the political will to actively work to expand housing opportunities for people with disabilities. Conversely, non-profit disability organizations have demonstrated that when given the opportunity and the resources, they are very successful at assisting people with disabilities to locate and maintain housing.

Based on the findings from this study, it is clear that major policy and program changes are needed to expand the participation of the disability community in housing programs and in local housing decisions. TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force recommend:

1. Reforms in the Section 811 tenant based rental assistance program including:

- *Allowing only non-profit disability organizations to apply for tenant based rental assistance funds.* PHAs should no longer be eligible. This small pool of resources should be available to non-profit disability organizations that have demonstrated success and commitment to use these resources for people with disabilities. PHAs have consistently demonstrated their reluctance to use these funds.
- *Eliminating the current policy that converts Section 811 tenant based rental assistance funding to Section 8 vouchers.* Section 811 tenant based assistance should be a more flexible resource with policies similar to the McKinney Shelter Plus

Care or Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) tenant based assistance programs. When Section 811 funding is converted to Section 8 vouchers, the program becomes more bureaucratic and faces additional hurdles and constraints that reduce its effective use for people with disabilities.

- *Provide one-percent of the Section 811 funding (or \$1 million whichever is less) to fund a technical assistance program for non-profit disability organizations administering the Section 811 tenant based assistance program.*
2. *A substantial increase in funding for federal housing programs that can be targeted to meet the housing needs of people with disabilities, such as the Section 811 program.* Section 811 funding was cut 50 percent in 1995 and housing production levels have declined dramatically since that time. New resources must be made available to make a dent in the housing needs of people with disabilities.
 3. *Better HUD monitoring and enforcement of the Consolidated Plan, PHA Plan, and the PHA Allocation Plan for “elderly only” designated housing.* It is important to ensure that a “fair share” of all generic affordable housing resources are allocated to people with disabilities – including public housing, Section 8 vouchers, HUD assisted privately-owned housing developments, as well as HOME and Community Development Block Grant funds. Housing for people with disabilities should be seen as a viable use for these resources. Issue 9 of *Opening Doors* provides more information about these generic affordable housing resources.
 4. *Require PHAs to address the priority housing needs of people with disabilities*

FROM THE EDITORS

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What can you do to make this happen? First, use the information in this issue – which is taken directly from our latest policy report titled *“A Failing Grade: A Report Card on the Affordable Housing System’s Response to the Needs of People with Disabilities”* – to hold government housing officials at all levels accountable for their failure to act. The CCD Housing Task Force has already circulated this report to members of Congress and will soon be using it as the basis for policy recommendations to HUD in January of 2001. You can do the same at the state and local level, and also incorporate your own experiences and efforts to get the affordable housing system to pay attention.

We learned from the surveys described in this issue that disability organizations that have developed their housing capacity, and have persistently and assertively pursued state and local government housing officials, can be very successful. During the coming year, TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force want to help more of you replicate this success!

Affordable Housing System Fails People with Disabilities

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in all PHA Allocation Plans. PHAs seeking to designate “elderly only” housing should be required to set-aside at least 33 percent of existing Section 8 “turnover” vouchers for people with disabilities.

5. *PHAs should also be required to adopt a mandatory preference in the Section 8 program for people with disabilities who receive SSI benefits.* This preference would allow people with disabilities who receive SSI benefits to be selected from the Section 8 waiting list before other people who don’t meet a preference are selected. The preference would be triggered in any locality where the cost of modest housing exceeds 50 percent of monthly SSI benefit amounts.
6. *Require PHAs to work with the disability community to address some*

of the other major barriers within the Section 8 and public housing programs that have a negative impact on people with disabilities. The disability community needs to be aware when a PHA intends to designate “elderly only” housing. Working with the PHA, disability organizations can ensure that this loss of housing for people with disabilities is adequately addressed through new Section 8 vouchers and by targeting funds from other affordable housing programs to people with disabilities.

New Role for the Disability Community

Even if the above recommendations are realized, the disability community at the state and local level must learn to become a more active player in the housing system to benefit from the housing programs that are available. The TAC and CCD Housing Task Force surveys found that – even without the changes to federal housing policy outlined above – a number of disability organizations have become successful players in the affordable housing system. For this success to be replicated, the non-profit disability community must become more involved in the development of state and local affordable housing strategies and build new partnerships with public and private housing agencies in every state and local community.

This approach is essential but not easy. Most government housing officials and housing providers – whose focus is on broader community development strategies – admit that they know little or nothing about the housing needs or housing preferences of people with disabilities. Additionally, there are no built-in fiscal or policy incentives for government housing officials and affordable housing providers to collaborate on housing for those households with the lowest incomes – particularly people with disabilities receiving SSI benefits. Housing advocates for people with disabilities must work to

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Does your Public Housing Agency measure up?

Below are some of the questions concerning the Section 8 program that TAC and the CCD Housing Task Force asked of the Public Housing Agencies surveyed. You can use these questions to find out how active your Housing Agency has been in meeting the housing needs of people with disabilities. Call them up or visit them, ask them these questions, and challenge them to get more involved. There is a good chance that more Section 8 vouchers will be available next year!

1. Does your Housing Agency currently administer HUD's Section 8 voucher program?
2. Is your Housing Agency aware of new Section 8 vouchers available from HUD through the Section 8 Mainstream Program for People with Disabilities? These are vouchers set aside specifically for the housing needs of people with disabilities.
3. Has your Housing Agency ever applied to HUD for any of these new Section 8 Mainstream vouchers?
4. If the answer to #3 is "yes:"
 - 4a. Which year(s) did the Housing Agency apply?
 - 1997
 - 1998
 - 1999
 - 2000
 - 4b. How many were awarded?
 - 4c. How many of those vouchers are currently leased?
 - 4d. How long is the Housing Agency's waiting list?
 - 4e. Is your Housing Agency planning on applying for more in the future? (If no, why not?)
5. If the answer to #3 is "no:"
 - 5a. Why not?
 - The Housing Agency could not demonstrate a need for new vouchers for people with disabilities.
 - The Housing Agency had major Section 8 program management

To convince a housing agency to apply for Section 8 vouchers for people with disabilities, you will need to have good housing needs data. Some data may be available through the housing agency's waiting list although not all waiting lists are representative of the need. You can also use data from TAC's Priced Out in 1998 publication, available through the Opening Doors web site (www.c-c-d.org/doors.html). The Social Security Administration can also provide data on the number of people with disabilities who are receiving SSI benefits by geographic area. (www.ssa.gov)

findings that were open and unresolved with HUD.

- The Housing Agency did not have the capacity to expand our Section 8 program beyond its current size.
 - The Housing Agency is not interested in obtaining new Section 8 vouchers for people with disabilities.
 - The Housing Agency did not understand the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and were not sure that our Housing Agency was eligible to apply.
 - The Housing Agency was unable to develop an operating plan as specified in the NOFA.
- 5b. Is the Housing Agency planning on applying in the future? (If no, why not?)
 6. Has any person with a disability, family member, or organization representing people with disabilities requested that your Housing Agency apply for these Section 8 vouchers?

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create these opportunities by aggressively pursuing relationships with housing officials. The surveys clearly indicate that these partnerships can leverage a significant expansion of affordable housing resources for people with disabilities.

Because some housing officials may be unwilling to address the housing needs of people with disabilities, the disability community must also learn how to monitor the housing decisions made by state and local government officials. These officials have a responsibility to address “priority housing needs” in local communities and to address the barriers and impediments to fair housing choices for people with disabilities. And, over time, they have an obligation to provide a “fair share” of government housing funding to meet the needs of people with disabilities who live in their communities.

Conclusion

In the end, improvements in affordable housing practices will require leadership on the part of the affordable housing system to recognize the need for housing and to develop proactive strategies to meet the need. PHAs and other local and state housing officials must first understand the housing needs of people with disabilities in their communities and then lead that community to use a “fair share of” its resources to meet that housing need. It will also require partnerships between these affordable housing players and the disability community to develop innovative changes to the system and ensure the creation of housing that meets the individualized needs of people with disabilities. Finally, changes in federal funding policies and programs are needed to encourage and support non-profit participation, and to build the skills, capacity and knowledge of the disability community to carry out these housing responsibilities, and to provide the foundation on which they can then build housing.

Opening Doors

A housing publication for the disability community

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