



# Moving into a Home of Your Own

## Transition Tips for Young Adults with Intellectual Challenges

Many young adults dream of living in their own place and sharing good times with friends as they build independent lives. Here are 21 tips to help decide when it's time to move, and to help find the right place, with appropriate support, in a welcoming neighborhood.

### Moving on — with some help

1. Ask your supports coordinator at the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) which local agencies offer residences and residential support for young adults with intellectual disabilities. Be sure the ODP file is updated with information about a residence change. In Pennsylvania, the ODP is the former Office of Mental Retardation Services. In New Jersey, it is the Division of Developmental Disabilities.
2. Ask about waiver funding for housing supports. In Pennsylvania, ask about Person/Family-Centered Waivers and Supportive Living Waivers.
3. If buying a home is a consideration, ask local Realtors if they have an agent who specializes in helping people with disabilities find homes.
4. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers low-interest mortgages to people with disabilities. Go to [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov) and request information from your county's Office of Housing and Community Development. The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency offers some support; visit [www.phfa.org](http://www.phfa.org). (An owner-occupied home isn't included in the Supplemental Security Income assets limit if it doesn't generate income for the person with a disability.)
5. Research self-directed support corporations or "microboards," which are nonprofits created by a group of family or friends to provide residences, support services and contracts with appropriate staff. Learn more at [www.ucp.org](http://www.ucp.org).
6. Inquire about independent-living training sessions from your local Center for Independent Living or other agencies. Visit [www.ilru.org](http://www.ilru.org).
7. When arranging long-term plans, consider establishing a special-needs trust to supplement living expenses, and consider appointing a trustee and guardian.

### The right place

8. There are many living options, including:
  - independent homeownership
  - shared, adjacent or co-housing, such as a twin home, row house or apartment within the family home, with the family providing primary support
  - renting, with or without support services from family or contracted staff
  - "lifesharing" — similar to adult foster care through an agency
  - community living arrangement (group home) with extensive support

9. When looking at locations, make sure to consider how easy it is to get to shopping, restaurants, recreation and public transportation.
10. How far from home is too far? Be sure to feel comfortable with the distance, and check that emergency support is nearby.
11. The home should be fully accessible, with a layout and amenities that provide comfort, safety and convenience.

### Good support staff

12. If residential supports through an agency are contracted, be certain licensing is current and all staff have been properly screened and trained. Be sure to meet all relevant people in the agency.
13. Residential support staff, part time or full time, should develop a written plan outlining goals and daily progress.

### The right time

14. Discuss and assess independent living skills at home and in the community. Is now the best time to move out?
15. Develop a budget, including long-range costs for supports. Does the move make financial sense? Review it with an attorney and financial adviser.
16. Identify family members or friends who will help with the transition to independent living and be sure they will provide ongoing support.
17. Seek advice from an attorney and supports coordinator to avoid a crisis during a serious health issue.

### Roommates are important

18. Be sure prospective roommates agree on issues such as support staff, personal and common living spaces, furnishings, TV schedules, food and cleaning. Make sure the families agree, too.
19. Calculate and agree on a support services budget and finances prior to moving in together.
20. As needed, schedule monthly meetings to resolve problems and to plan social activities.

### Time to celebrate

21. Throw a housewarming party, welcoming family, friends and neighbors!