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Introduction

This guide will help you understand the types of living arrangements that are available for children and adults with a developmental disability. It describes the different residential options, and the help and support that you or your family member can get depending on the option you choose.

Preparing Emotionally For A Move Out Of The Home

All families need to prepare emotionally for a change as significant as a son or daughter moving out of the home. When a son or daughter leaves home, families may experience many emotions, including feelings of guilt and sadness. They wonder whether the son or daughter will be safe, well cared for, and still eager to be with family and friends. Parents who have devoted most of their time and attention to child-rearing may also feel at loose ends now that this part of their life is changing.

If you experience these emotions, you may find it helpful to talk to other regional center families who have dealt or are dealing with a son or daughter leaving home. You can do this by joining a support group or by asking to be connected to a Peer Support Partner. For information on either of these options, ask your Service Coordinator or contact the Koch-Young Resource Center.

Whatever your decision about where you or your family member will live, it is most important that the decision be informed – and informed decisions require time. You should take enough time to investigate all the options and consider their relative advantages and disadvantages. Plan ahead, visit different kinds of living arrangements, talk to service providers and staff, as well as individuals who are living in these different settings. Careful planning will ensure that you and your family make a decision that is right for everyone.

What Community Living Options Are Available?

A number of different living options are available for you or your family member, depending on your life goals and preferences. Some individuals live at home with their family. Others may live in a licensed home in the community. Still others may wish to live more independently. For example, they may want to rent an apartment, house, or condominium. It may also be possible for an adult to purchase or lease a home for life.

Each of these living options has advantages and disadvantages, and what is best for you or your family member at one time may not be best at another time. So, you or your family member may (and probably will) live in different arrangements at different times. The pages that follow describe the most common living arrangements for people with a developmental disability.

Living At Home With The Family

In most cases, the preferred option for your child with a disability is to live at home with your family. As your son or daughter matures, he or she may prefer to remain in the family home. If so, the regional center can help you get the services and supports you need to make that possible. To ensure that your family gets the help you need, Lanterman will assist you in partnering with appropriate professionals. In addition to your Service Coordinator, these professionals may include developmental specialists, behavior management specialists, respite care providers, in-home health care providers, and others who can address your specific needs.

For example, if your son or daughter has special health or medical needs, the regional center may help you find someone to come into your home and provide nursing services

or other types of care. If he or she uses a wheelchair, the Center may help you find someone to assist with such tasks as bathing and dressing.

Financial support for individuals living at home. If you are an adult living with your family, you are most likely eligible to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits to help pay your living expenses. You are also usually eligible for Medi-Cal benefits. Children living at home may be eligible for SSI and Medi-Cal depending on the child's disability and the family's income.

If you need some type of special services (for example, training on using the bus system, assistance from a personal attendant, or some kind of in-home health services), financial support is available from a number of sources. The In-Home Support Services (IHSS) program may pay for things such as personal care or health services provided in the home. The regional center may help pay for other services if they are not paid for by sources such as private insurance, Medi-Cal, or IHSS.

Living Options Outside The Family Home

If you or your family decide that it would be best for you to move out of the family home, there are various options available.

Foster Family Agencies / Family Home Agencies

Children with special challenges can live in homes that are certified by a foster family agency. Likewise, adults can live in homes certified by a family home agency. These homes generally have a small number of children – sometimes only one or two – with special needs, and in the case of adults, the homes will have no more than two people with special needs.

Children and adults living in such a home are included as a member of the family and participate in family activities. If the person has special needs, such as behavioral or health challenges, your Service Coordinator works with the agency to see that special services and supports are there to help the individual remain in that family setting.

The foster family setting will become home to this individual. Still, we encourage relatives to be as involved with their family member and with the foster family as possible.

(Note: The children's homes are not associated with the Department of Children and Family Services.)

Financial assistance for people in foster family or family home agencies. People who live with a foster family may receive SSI and Medi-Cal. Eligibility rules are the same as for people who live in other types of community care homes.

Licensed Community Care Homes

A community care home is licensed by the state of California to provide services and supports for children and adults with developmental disabilities. That means it must meet certain minimum requirements. Usually up to six individuals live together and usually two people share a bedroom. There is 24-hour care and supervision. The facility provides meals for the residents and also provides support to help residents learn skills they need to be more independent. For example, they may help with self-care (bathing, dressing) or other daily activities such as cooking or using the bus system. They also provide outings and other social activities.

There are different kinds of community care homes. For example, some homes specialize in helping individuals with physical disabilities. Other homes help people with behavior challenges or special health needs.

Financial support for people living in community care homes. If you or your adult son or daughter live in a community care home, you will probably be eligible for SSI. If you receive SSI, at the point you move into a community care home, the SSI needs to go toward the cost of the home. Your SSI will cover the cost of room and board, and the regional center will provide supplemental funding for additional services you may need, such as support and supervision.

Generally, the regional center acts as the representative payee for SSI benefits for children and adults living in residential facilities. This means that the center receives the monthly SSI payment and forwards it to the licensed community home.

The law requires parents of minors living in community care facilities to share the cost of care for their children. Parents are required to contribute a fee according to a sliding scale, based on their income and ability to pay.

Residents of licensed community care homes also receive a monthly payment to cover Personal and Incidental (P&I) expenses. P&I funds may be used for clothing, entertainment, or whatever else the consumer chooses.

Homes that Provide Nursing or Habilitation Services

Some homes are specially designed for people who need nursing care, regular medical supervision, or habilitation services. Habilitation services are for people who need to develop the skills necessary to look after their daily personal care needs. Nursing and habilitation homes are treatment oriented. The goal of treatment in these homes is to help residents prepare to move into a more independent, less structured living environment.

Health or habilitation homes are also licensed by the state of California and must meet certain minimum requirements. As in community care homes, usually six or fewer people live together. Staff in these homes may have special training in areas such as nursing, physical therapy, or occupational therapy. In addition to the health and habilitation services, individuals may receive training in the activities of daily living and independent living skills. Residents also usually go on outings, and take part in other social activities.

Financial support for residents of health and habilitation homes. Costs of care in health and habilitation homes are usually covered by Medi-Cal. Residents of these homes also receive P&I payments. If an individual is not eligible for Medi-Cal but needs to live in a home that provides health or habilitation services, then it is possible that the regional center would pay the cost. Check with your Service Coordinator if you have questions about your or your family member's Medi-Cal eligibility.

Living Options For Individuals Who Want More Independence

For adults who choose to live outside their family home, but do not want to live in a licensed community care home, the regional center offers supported or independent living as an option. We will help you assess and obtain the level of support you need to live successfully on your own.

Supported or Independent Living

In supported or independent living, individuals live in their own homes, apartments, or condominiums in the community. They may pay rent, lease, or own the place where they live. They may live alone or with another person or persons whom they choose. This may be a husband or wife, another loved one, a friend, or just a roommate.

Anyone, regardless of his or her level of disability, may request assistance to live on their own. Almost everyone needs help to do this, however, and the regional center helps you find assistance with things such as learning to cook, to clean house, or to ride the bus. Most people also need ongoing support to live on their own. This may include help to pay bills, make a budget, or go to the doctor. Some people may just need someone to check in with them at regular times. Individuals with a physical disability – for example, people who use a wheelchair – may need someone to come into their home to help them with personal care such as bathing, dressing, and moving to and from their wheelchair.

Some of the support you need in order to live on your own may be the kinds of things that friends or family members can do. (These people make up your Circle of Support.) This kind of support is called “natural support.” For example, friends may take you to your

place of worship. Your family may help you get furniture for your new place or help you learn to cook. For the things that families or friends cannot do, a supported living service provider will assist you.

If you do not need ongoing support to live on your own, you have the option of choosing independent living. You may receive some independent living skills training or personal assistance support from an independent living service provider. The training or support provided may change based on the review at the time of the IPP.

Financial assistance for people in supported or independent living. If you want to live in independent or supported living, it's important to understand that you need to pay for your rent, utilities such as telephone and electricity, and food. You may receive SSI benefits or have income from a job, or both. These funds need to cover your monthly living expenses. So it's important for you to make a realistic budget and stick to it.

If you have physical disabilities or other special needs which require someone to come into your home to provide personal assistance, you may be eligible to receive services through the IHSS program. The regional center may provide supplemental funding for additional services and supports if needed.

Your medical care may be paid for by Medi-Cal. And if you have a job, you may have other health insurance as well.

Choosing The Right Living Arrangement

Choosing a living option is no different from making any other important life decision. You or your family member need to think about your immediate and longer term life goals, gather information about the options you are considering, and see which option is the best match for you.

As when taking other important steps, it's important to take some time so that you make the best decisions for the future. Many families begin the process of considering residential options a number of times before they finally make the decision to follow through with a move out of the family home. Give yourself plenty of time – because it takes time to fine tune the living arrangement that best matches your or your family member's preferences. In addition, many service support programs need an extended period of time to put an individual support plan in place, so you should start planning at least a year before you expect to make a change in living arrangements.

If you want to investigate community living options for yourself or your family member, it is especially important for you to talk to your Service Coordinator. He or she will suggest that you talk about this with your Circle of Support as part of your Person-Centered Plan.

Once you've worked with your Service Coordinator and discussed your desires with your Circle of Support, you will have a better idea of what kind of living arrangement would work best – based on what you need and prefer. Adults, in particular, can choose from a wide variety of lifestyles. For example:

- You may decide to live at home with your family while going to college.
- You may decide to try a licensed community care home because you enjoy being around other people a lot and don't want to be in your own apartment and cook your own meals.
- You may want to try living in an apartment with a roommate, but have never done that before and would like to have some instruction in cooking, handling money, shopping, and cleaning house.

These are just a few examples from a number of possibilities. Remember, the same living arrangement is not right for everyone. Remember also:

Planning for the future isn't a once-and-for-all kind of thing. An individual's ideas about what he or she wants will probably change over time. Changes will occur as the individual learns more about his or her hopes, talents, needs, and responsibilities. For example, an individual may choose to live in a licensed home in the community right now, but decide to try supported living a few years from now.

Looking At Community Care Homes

If the decision is that a community care home is the best option for you or your son or daughter, the next step is to visit some homes. Your Service Coordinator will attempt to give you a list of 1–3 homes that were selected based on what he or she knows about your preferences, needs and goals. You should visit all these homes so you can make an informed choice.

The following are some things to do, things to look for, and questions to ask when visiting community care homes.

Talk to the staff in the home.

- Ask them questions about themselves, such as whether they like their job, and what kind of experience they have had working with people with disabilities.
- Ask them questions about the home and the services and supports it provides; for example, what kinds of things they teach people to do and the kinds of things they do for fun.
- Ask questions that will help you know how much the home encourages individuals to be independent and what social-recreational opportunities they have.

Talk to individuals who live in the home.

- Ask residents some of the same questions you ask the staff. You should get similar answers.
- Ask residents questions about themselves, such as what they like and dislike about living in the home.
- Ask residents what they have learned, what kinds of things they do during the day and the evening, and what they do for fun.
- If possible, speak to other parents and ask them how they feel about the services provided in the home.

Look at the home and its surroundings.

- Ask yourself whether you like the home, inside and out, and whether it would be an enjoyable place to live.
- Look for evidence of homelike touches and individualized areas such as the residents' bedrooms.
- Note whether the neighborhood surrounding the home is residential, and investigate to see whether it is safe.
- If it's important to you, determine whether the home is near a shopping center or mall, or on a bus line. Find out whether other things you need are nearby, or are accessible by public transportation (e.g., church, doctor's office).

If you don't like any of the homes, or if you're not quite sure about which one would be best, talk to your Service Coordinator. Discuss your concerns, or ask him or her to suggest more homes for you to visit.

Looking At Supported Living

People who select supported living as their preferred option must choose a supported living service provider. This agency will work with you to determine what support will be needed and how that support will be provided. Your Service Coordinator will give you a list of supported living programs with which you can meet before you make your choice. Your Service Coordinator recommends service providers based on availability, what he or she knows about where and how you want to live, what you want to learn to do, and what kinds of services and supports you may need.

It's a very good idea for you to meet with all of the service providers on the list. The supported living service provider plays a very significant role in your life. The following are some things to do, things to look for, and questions to ask when meeting a supported living service provider.

Talk to people at the service agency that will be serving you. Once you have selected an agency, you can be involved in selecting the staff who will be working directly with you.

- Ask the staff questions about themselves, such as whether they like their job, and what kinds of experience they have working with people with disabilities.
- Ask them what kinds of services and supports they offer.
- Ask them to describe the different kinds of living arrangements of the people they work with.
- Ask them how they make sure individuals are involved in their neighborhoods and communities.
- Ask questions that help you judge whether they would help you do what you want to do, rather than what everyone else does.

The more variety the service provider allows, the better for the individual. It's important to find out how much the supported living service provider knows about all the services that are available. They should work closely with the regional center and use the range of community resources, and they should also be willing to use natural supports to enhance the person's life.

Talk to other individuals who receive services and supports from this supported living service provider.

- Ask them about the kinds of services and supports they receive.
- Ask them what they like about supported living.
- Ask them how the service provider treats them.

Ask to see some of the places where individuals are living.

- Look at these places to see if they are in neighborhoods with other houses and apartments.
- See if they are near shopping centers or malls or on a bus line.
- Look at the neighborhood and see if it feels safe.

How Can You Be Assured Of Receiving Quality Services?

Lanterman is committed to providing high quality services. Please refer to Section 6 of this Guide to Lanterman Regional Center for more information.

How Does the Regional Center Ensure that Persons Living Outside Their Family Home Receive Quality Services?

Naturally, you have concerns about the quality of care that you or your family member will receive living outside of the family home. This is a primary concern for the regional center as well.

One way that we ensure quality is by having your Service Coordinator visit with you or your family member in your chosen community living arrangement at least once every three months. During this visit your Service Coordinator will review your progress and discuss whether you are satisfied with your services and if they are meeting your needs.

Another important way that we ensure quality is by completing quality assurance monitoring of all licensed community care homes and homes that provide nursing and/or habilitation services. We have a trained team of specialists who complete 2-3 monitoring visits per year at each of the homes in our area. At least two of these monitoring visits are conducted on an unannounced basis. The quality assurance visits may last from two hours to a full day, depending on the type of review completed and the number of persons residing in the home. But no matter how long the monitoring visit lasts, our quality assurance specialists always ensure three things: the home is clean and safe, the health and welfare of persons living in the home are ensured, and the rights and dignity of persons living in the home are respected.

Often, representatives from other organizations such as Community Care Licensing or Health Care Licensing also have ongoing monitoring responsibilities with these homes. Additionally, if your family member attends a school or day program, the teachers and staff are trained to look for any concerns or potential problems. In short, many people will be working together to ensure that you or your family member receive quality care.

In addition, we have a staff of specialists who work closely with the homes in our area to keep them informed about our expectations and to provide ongoing support and training. Our Center also provides ongoing educational opportunities, training and technical assistance to our service providers. Additionally, the Department of Developmental Services now requires and provides training and certification for all direct support staff who provide care in the homes.

What Can You Do to Help Ensure that Your Family Member Receives Quality Services?

We urge you to continue taking an active part in your family member's life and in the activities at your family member's new living arrangement. Your observations are very important and we will count on you to let us know if you see anything in the home that requires our attention.

In the event that there are problems or concerns, we want you to know that we're only a phone call away. It's our policy to respond promptly to any calls that alert us to problems or potential problems.

What If You're Not Satisfied With The Services You Receive?

We hope that you will be satisfied with the services you or your family member receive. You should have the same level of satisfaction whether you or your family member live at home with the family, in a licensed community home, in a foster home, in a home that provides nursing or habilitation services, or in supported living.

Despite all our efforts, however, things do not always go exactly as they should. If things do not go as you think they should, or if you are not satisfied with the services being provided, please talk to your Service Coordinator. The most important thing for you to know is:

If you are not satisfied with the services and supports you are receiving, we at Lanterman Regional Center want to know, because we are here to help you.

Section 6 of this Guide to Lanterman Regional Center has more information about how you can provide us with feedback or initiate a complaint.

Your Rights And Responsibilities

Whatever your choice of living options, you or your family member have very specific rights and responsibilities when living outside the family home. See Section 8 of this Guide for more information about those rights and responsibilities.