

## **Steps Towards Developing Housing**

### **Practice life skills at home and in the community.**

Learning to do chores at home, like cooking and laundry, can help you get ready to live on your own. At the same time, developing skills, like shopping and managing money, can help you be active in the community. If you have an Individualized Education Program (IEP), you can ask for a community skills assessment as part of your IEP transition plan.

### **Develop strategies for independent living.**

Keys to living on your own include being able to:

- Plan
- Organize
- Manage your time

Creating and following routines can make it easier to remember and complete tasks. Try different supports to find out what works best for you, like:

- Visual prompts
- Color-coded schedule or organizer
- Scheduling or calendar apps

**<https://docs.autismspeaks.org/housing-roadmap/welcome/>**

### **Think about housing options.**

Where and how do you think you'll want to live as an adult? You may have several housing options, like:

- Living at home with your family
- Living on your own in a house, apartment or shared living
- College housing
- A group home

### **Apply for Home and Community-based Services.**

All states provide home and community-based services (HCBS) to help children and adults with disabilities live at home. Eligibility varies within and across states. Services can include:

- Day or overnight services
- Employment services
- Residential services, including shared living and group homes
- Transportation services

HCBS may have long waiting lists. It's a good idea to apply for services as soon as your child is diagnosed with autism.

### **Resources**

- [From Autism Speaks on funding for housing](#)
- [From the Autism Housing Network on housing options](#)
- [From the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Center for Autism Research on housing for adults with ASD](#)
- [From Medicaid.gov on Home and Community-based Services](#)

### **Find low-income housing supports.**

Contact the local housing authority to make sure you're on the waiting list for rental assistance for:

- Low-income housing
- Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers

If you're not already on the list for these programs, ask when you can be added. Even if your family isn't low-income, when you turn 18 you are eligible for services is based on your own income.

### **Resources**

- [From Autism Speaks on funding for housing](#)
- [From usa.gov on finding affordable rental housing](#)

## **Start saving for adult housing.**

Contact a special needs planner to explore saving options, like:

- Special needs trust
- Pooled trust
- Life insurance-funded annuity

Open an Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) account. You want to save in accounts that won't be used later to determine your child's eligibility for support programs, like Social Security.

## **Resources**

- [From Autism Speaks on special needs financial planning](#)
- [From Autism Speaks on ABLE accounts](#)
- [From the ABLE National Resource Center on ABLE accounts](#)
- [From the Academy of Special Needs Planners on special needs planning](#)
- [From the Social Security Administration on Social Security](#)

## **Terms to know**

### **ABLE account**

Stands for Achieving a Better Life Experience. A savings account that helps people with disabilities and their families save for housing, education, transportation, medical and other expenses related to their disability. It helps individuals with disabilities, including autism, save for future needs without losing access to other resources.

### **Life-insurance funded annuity**

Income paid by a life insurance company where a death benefit is divided up over a number of years into equivalent amounts that the beneficiary receives each year, as opposed to a lump sum.

### **Pooled trust**

A special needs trust organized by a nonprofit organization that pools resources of many people.

## **Special needs trust**

A savings fund that helps pay for your child's special care needs over the lifetime but doesn't affect their ability to get public benefits.

## **Special needs planner**

A professional financial advisor who is an expert in savings plans for people with disabilities and special needs.

## **Identify your housing needs.**

Your housing choice should be a good fit for your:

- Support needs
- Financial needs
- Personal preferences

If you're not happy with an option, keep looking. Housing can have long waiting lists, so when you find something that meets your needs, put your name on the waiting list. You may need to get an evaluation to be accepted for housing or to get funding.

## **Resources**

- [From the Autism Speaks Housing and Residential Supports Tool Kit](#)
- [Independent Living Research Utilization program for resources by state](#)
- [From the Urban Land Institute on residential options for people with autism](#)

## **Visit housing options.**

Going in person to check out different housing choices can help you decide which is right for you. You can:

- Ask a parent or guardian to schedule a visit
- Meet in person with the landlord or housing director
- Talk to autistic adults who live there to find out what it's like

### **Get services and supports ready.**

Most housing doesn't include services and supports. This is why applying for home and community-based services (HCBS) as early as possible is so important. You want to have services ready. These can include

- Health and mental care
- Employment services
- Money management
- **Transportation services**

Continue to seek out low-income housing supports and save for adult housing. Make sure you are on the waiting list for rental assistance, if needed.

### **Resources**

- [From Medicaid.gov on Home and Community-based Services](#)

### **Talk about changes and new responsibility with your family.**

Even if you decide to keep living at home with your family or caregivers, you're still transitioning to adulthood. Talk to your family about changes in expectations and support. For example, when living at home as an adult, you may take on more responsibility for your own:

- Belongings
- Living space
- Time

### **Review your wants and needs related to housing.**

Look again at what you're planning for adult housing:

- Will you live in your parents', caregivers' or family's house?
- Will you live on your own or with roommates?
- Do you need to be close to public transportation?

Answering questions like these can help you know what's important in making decisions about housing. Think about what works for you now and what you need in your new space to feel comfortable and supported.

## **Make a budget.**

Moving into a new place can be expensive. There are lots of costs, like:

- Furniture
- Moving fees
- Rent
- Security deposits
- Utilities like electricity, water and heat

Make a budget to help you plan for a move and other living expenses. A good guideline is that rent should cost less than one-third of your monthly income.

## **Continue to work on setting up services and supports.**

Make sure you apply for home and community-based services (HCBS) as early as possible. Check in with your local housing authority on your status on the waiting list for rental assistance. Once you turn 18, you are eligible for low-income housing supports based on your own income. Continue to work with a special needs planner to be sure you are saving as much as possible for your future housing needs.

## **Resources**

- [From Medicaid.gov on Home and Community-based Services](#)
- [Continue to assess your new living situation.](#)

Once you move to independent living, it doesn't have to be forever. If you need to, you can make a change. Your choice of housing may change as you get older. This is OK.

Continuing to evaluate your living situation and what is or isn't working can help you plan for the future.

- [From the Autism Speaks Housing and Residential Supports Tool Kit](#)
- [Independent Living Research Utilization program for resources by state](#)