



INFORMATIONAL BRIEF

Participant Experiences
with Housing Search Assistance
and Implications for Service
Providers that Serve People
with Disabilities



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Participant Experiences with Housing Search Assistance and Implications for Service Providers that Serve People with Disabilities

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Understanding Access and Use of Housing Assistance Through Participants' Experience

Program participants' experiences with housing search assistance provide unique insights and perspectives that cannot be fully understood without this direct personal experience. Including the perspectives of people with disabilities can provide a deeper understanding of the challenges that they face while obtaining and using housing assistance. This understanding can help in developing more effective approaches, strategies, and programs that are tailored to the needs and experiences of the people they are intended to serve. In addition, including the perspectives of people with lived experiences can help to amplify their voices and empower them to be agents of change in their own lives and communities. This self-sufficiency can lead to greater social inclusion, greater equity, and greater participation in decisionmaking processes, conditions that are essential for creating a more inclusive and just society.

This informational brief presents the stories and experiences of three non-elderly people with disabilities who received pre-tenancy services to help them obtain and move into assisted housing.¹ These individuals share three key factors that promote a satisfactory experience with assistance services: (1) a single or limited number of case managers, (2) a focus on positive relationships between participants and program staff, and (3) assistance that taps into participants' social networks, thereby promoting self-advocacy in their effort to maintain stable housing. Finding services that meet these standards was a persistent challenge for the individuals interviewed for this study. This obstacle indicates the need for service providers to consider a different approach to outreach, including the provision of more detailed information on available services.

The research team selected the three individuals highlighted in the brief based on the diversity of their needs and experiences. All efforts have been made to protect their identities, including changing their names, location, and other identifying features. A focus on these stories ultimately serves to foreground the experience of the participants across the program sites, offering a different and critical perspective relative to those of the program staff and partners. These experiences, alongside those of the other five individuals who participated in the study, offer key lessons about the factors that affect these individuals' success in locating, leasing up, and maintaining housing; the strategies they felt were most responsive to their needs; and potential areas for program improvements.²

¹ *Assisted housing* is defined in this study as housing for which residents are assisted in paying rent, typically through a voucher or other form of rental assistance.

² The research team was unable to recruit participants from all programs included in the study.

Housing Search Assistance for Non-Elderly People with Disabilities Study

This brief is part of a study that sought to identify promising strategies that supportive housing programs used to assist non-elderly people with disabilities to overcome challenges in identifying, applying to, and moving into assisted housing. The research team reviewed the extant literature and collaborated with experts in the field to develop case studies of nine programs across the country that are broadly successful in supporting people with disabilities in transitioning into housing—generally from an institutional setting, non-permanent housing, or homelessness:

- Bridgeway Supportive Housing
- Swords to Plowshares' Supportive Housing
- Home Forward
- Downtown Emergency Service Center's (DESC's) Permanent Supportive Housing
- Louisiana's Permanent Supportive Housing
- New Reach's Supportive Housing
- Connecticut's Money Follows the Person (MFP) Demonstration
- Alliance for Disability Advocates
- Lifetime Independence for Everyone Inc.

These case studies draw on the experiences and perspectives of the programs' stakeholders, including program staff, community and governmental partners, and participants whom these programs have served in the past. Each case study describes the challenges that non-elderly people with disabilities face while securing housing, including accessibility and affordability. Furthermore, these case studies catalog key challenges and strategies that these programs use to successfully support participants in applying to rental assistance programs, searching for housing, leasing up, and ultimately moving into a unit. The case studies and associated challenges and strategies are available in the *Final Comprehensive Report*.

Shannon's Experience with Medicaid Money Follows the Person Program

"It's been quite a journey. I just wish I had somebody better [as a housing coordinator] ... that's all. I wish I really had someone to be there for me. I didn't tour any place and there were no leads on her end, she did nothing for me, to God's honest truth ... It's just hard because I'm disabled, and I rely on people."

-Program participant Shannon

The Medicaid Money Follows the Person (MFP) Rebalancing Demonstration is a federal initiative created under the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 and expanded by the 2010 Affordable Care Act. MFP caters to individual preferences, rebalances Medicaid expenditures, and helps states transition people needing long-term services and supports from institutional settings into the community. As of 2022, MFP operates in 41 states and the District of Columbia.³ Several of the profiled programs in this study use Medicaid funding to support a wide range of participants in their efforts to find housing that meets their needs.

Shannon's Search for Housing

Shannon's life changed suddenly when a cycling accident left her with a traumatic brain injury and the inability to walk. Following a multiyear recovery period in a rehabilitation center, she was no longer able to work or live in her previous home, needing instead to move closer to family and find wheelchair-accessible housing. Shannon owned two cats, who were an integral part of her family, and she needed to find a home that would be able to accommodate her pets. Her initial search for housing was unsuccessful, but a nurse at her rehabilitation facility informed her about the MFP program. Shannon reached out to the program on her own and connected with a transition and housing coordinator who helped begin the process of finding a new home for her and her cats. Shannon noted that once she learned about MFP, she did not pursue other programs. She recalled: "I thought it just sounded great. I just stuck with going through them and never researched if there was actually another program out there. I have no idea if there was. That's the honest truth."

³ *List of Money Follows the Person Grantees | Medicaid*. (n.d.-b). <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/long-term-services-supports/money-follows-person/list-of-money-follows-person-grantees/index.html>

Shannon had access to a tablet and the internet at her rehabilitation center, enabling her to engage in the housing search process mostly on her own, with occasional help from family members.

Shannon had multiple requirements for her new home: wheelchair accessibility, a pet policy, access to laundry, certain home furnishings, and a home health aide who could help her during the day.

During her interview, Shannon stressed the impact a housing coordinator can have on the success of a housing search. The job of a housing coordinator is to help individuals locate a suitable home. Unfortunately, Shannon felt that her coordinator offered little help and largely left her to find a house on her own. Although Shannon had access to a tablet and family who were able to help her, she found this process to be very challenging and emotionally taxing. She recalled, “I did so much on my own. Just sitting there in the facility ... thank God I had a tablet ... because I did everything on that. I had to research everything myself. I was making this long list of all these apartments. I tried to apply to housing [assistance] ... but it’s extremely hard to get into housing [support] ... the waitlist is long. Some housing places take [persons experiencing homelessness] in before anybody else.”

Furthermore, Shannon was on a strict timeline; she needed to relocate from the nursing facility within 180 days under the MFP requirements. As a result, she could not wait for a spot in public housing to become available. Instead, she was forced to rely on private housing, which also had time constraints: “I filled out applications and some didn’t work out. It wasn’t available and this and that. I didn’t have a huge choice. I had to take ‘Okay, they’ve got a one bedroom available, and they take pets,’ so it was a case of ‘Okay, I got to take this place.’”

Navigating the Transition

Shannon’s experience with her transition coordinator was very positive. A transition coordinator helps individuals move from rehabilitation facilities into their new homes. Once Shannon had identified a suitable apartment, the transition coordinator offered Shannon a number of services to help her move into her new home. These services included helping with paperwork, arranging the physical move (including transportation for Shannon and moving trucks for her belongings), and helping Shannon acquire the items she needed to live comfortably in her new apartment. Even though she already had support from her friends and family, MFP provided significant assistance during the move-in process. Shannon described the sense of relief she felt for the extra help: “This is a great part. This is a very positive part ... I needed [a bed], a bureau, I needed a kitchen set ... [The transition coordinator] listed up all this stuff [she could provide]. I was like, ‘Are you kidding me?’ I was blown away, and overjoyed. ... Also, they go shopping for you before you move in, and they get you all kinds of cleaning supplies and towels. Oh my God, I can’t even think. I’m serious. Everything to have in your shower, in your bathroom. Just the little vanity things. Oh my God. They do that. ... While I was moving in, here comes [the transition coordinator] and another helper with tons of bags ... of all my groceries ... they’re trying to put it all away for me.”

Shannon also found her transition coordinator to be very helpful in finding a home health aide who “clicked” with Shannon and in helping Shannon learn about and navigate her new community. She

gave her maps to local grocery stores and pharmacies and connected her with a local company that provides transportation services to people with disabilities.

“I don’t really want to be here [in this specific complex], but I’m stuck. ... My family has been so great ... but I just don’t think I can afford another move. ... I will tell you that in the next town over from me, they have a newly built housing facility and it’s beautiful. I did apply, but again, it’s the waitlist. I have no idea if I’ll ever even get a phone call. Also, if they did call and say, ‘Hey, we got a one bedroom,’ could I essentially get out of my lease and get out of here? I don’t know if they would even let me do that.”

-Program participant Shannon

Ongoing Challenges and Recommendations

Shannon has been living in her home for a few years now. She describes her home as comfortable and safe. The apartment complex has various amenities, although many of them are inaccessible to wheelchair users. However, Shannon describes her transition overall as challenging; she was forced to spend several years recovering from her injuries without the company of her pets, and she continues to face structural barriers that make it difficult for her to move somewhere else.

Shannon’s experience with the misalignment of timelines and sequencing of available services is a common challenge, which staff and participants have identified across many of the profiled programs. This issue remains a persistent challenge for many people with disabilities, particularly those who need accommodations, require accessibility, and have pets or family members with specific housing needs (as in Shannon’s case).

Many program participants share Shannon’s belief that the quality of the relationship with her assigned coordinators affected the ease of her transition process and her emotional state. Every interviewed participant noted that their **coordinators were a major driving force in their satisfaction (or lack thereof) with their program**. Shannon’s experience with her housing coordinator was stressful and discouraging, but her experience with her transition coordinator was extremely positive and provided the support she needed. Shannon recommends that **programs screen staff** carefully to “make sure that they are the type of person that you need ... meaning they are courteous, they are helpful, caring, and that they are available to people in need.”

Shannon feels that the relationship with the transition coordinator can serve as a model. In addition to the support she received while moving into her new home and locating community services, she said that the transition coordinator always communicated effectively and helped her transition out of the program when her services expired. In their close-out conversation, she said, “When [the

transition coordinator] did call and say it was ending and asked me if I needed anything ... she was so funny, she said, 'Yes, I think there might be \$30 left for you.' I said, 'No, I can't think of anything [I need] that would cost \$30.' That was ... so funny."

Maria's Experience with a Center for Independent Living

Centers for Independent Living (CIL) are a key component of the Administration for Community Living's Aging and Disability Networks that work to provide support to older adults and people with disabilities. CILs act as advocates for community inclusion, providing services that empower people with disabilities to live independently in their communities. CILs came into existence under the Rehabilitation Act, with subsequent amendments from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S. Code § 796).⁴ CILs aim to empower people with disabilities by offering services that are designed, directed, and delivered by people with disabilities. CILs are required to have at least 51 percent of all staff and the board of directors be people with disabilities.

"It was like a job, daily, making these calls [to find housing and assistance] ... calling everybody I could and get as much information as I can for one day, and then the next day, I'll start again, because it changes daily. Some days, [the calls] work. Some days, they do not. I advocate for myself because there is nobody else out there that is going to."

-Program participant Maria

Maria's Search for Housing

Before connecting with a CIL in her area, Maria had qualified for disability benefits. A single mother with two adult children, Maria's disabilities prevent her from maintaining long-term employment, and her benefits are insufficient to afford housing. Maria had experienced sporadic periods of homelessness during the past several years. When she connected with a CIL, she had been living in her car for about a month. Throughout her period of unhoused living, Maria had been working with multiple organizations in her area to try to find housing. **Ultimately, it was a family connection that placed her in contact with a religious charity that then introduced her to a local CIL. The charity also provided Maria with assistance in securing emergency housing at a local motel.**

⁴ 29 U.S. Code § 796a - Definitions. n.d.) LII / Legal Information Institute.
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/29/796a#3>.

“I was networking. I’m very resourceful, and I know the resources for my area. I was contacting daily, working it hard, trying to find somewhere that would help me. That’s the only way I was able to get into one. I was able to because I worked it. You can’t just make one phone call and expect it to happen. You can’t make one phone call a day and expect it to happen. You have to work the resources and network.”

-Program participant Maria

Before she found the CIL, Maria had placed herself on the waitlist for her local public housing authority. She described the frustration of waiting for a home, saying, “I was homeless and ... living in my car for months. Every time I’d call [the public housing authority], every couple of weeks, they’d tell me the same thing [about the waiting period], 2 or 3 months, same thing, 2 or 3 months, over and over and over.” Maria worked with a charitable organization to locate an apartment; the organization covered her application fee and security deposit. Maria explained that when she notified the public housing authority, she was told, “Oh, well, I’m sorry. Since you went out of agency, you are no longer eligible for our assistance. Oh, but if you do get evicted ... feel free to come back and apply again.” Unfortunately, Maria was later evicted from that apartment due to financial circumstances, and, lacking faith in securing a spot on the public housing authority’s waitlist, she reached out to the CIL for assistance. Working alongside the CIL, Maria ultimately found a suitable apartment and moved in within weeks.

Navigating the Transition

Maria’s CIL assigned her a case manager. Although the case manager provided her guidance, Maria took it upon herself to do most of the work. Her CIL provided a list of apartments that would accept housing assistance, but Maria initiated the conversations with property managers on her own. **Maria knew she could have relied upon her case manager more: “There’s a lot of things she didn’t have to do with me ... She would have, and could have, but she didn’t need to. We would just talk about it, and I’ll take care of it, and she’d ask for an update. ... She was also there just for me to vent to, just to listen, which was very helpful for that time, and still is. In fact, I’ve texted her this morning because I’m having an issue with the apartment owner here in my current apartment.”**

Although Maria was eventually able to move into a new apartment, her transition was not always smooth. Although she believes that the apartment meets her housing needs, she has had difficulty acquiring furnishings, such as a bed. Her case manager ordered her a bed the day she requested one, but months have passed, and she has yet to receive one. According to her case manager, this delay is common. She recalls her case manager explaining, “We can help you, but you’re going to have to hurry up and wait. Hurry up and wait.” In addition, Maria has a few ongoing concerns with

the management of her apartment complex, often feeling that landlords stigmatize people on housing assistance and unfairly monitor their behavior. Nevertheless, she notes that she reaches out regularly to her case manager, who is available to her on an ongoing basis and helps her navigate these types of challenges.

“I’m very thankful for the organizations that have given me the assistance. ... I am speechless, the amount of gratefulness I have for these organizations is unbounded, limitless. The only thing I say is they need to all work together, especially in the same town, it just makes sense.”

-Program participant Maria

Ongoing Challenges and Recommendations

Maria’s next steps are uncertain. She is currently displeased with what she feels is poor building management, and she is unsure if she will be able to maintain her case manager beyond a period of 6 months. She has a strong and positive relationship with her case manager and hopes this support will help her avoid experiencing homelessness. She describes their relationship as akin to a friendship: ***“Her and I have more than just case worker, social worker status I consider her not a really true friend, but we’re friendly, we’re friends. I know I can call her for any matter at all, and if she was able to help, she would.”***

Maria has a great deal of experience in navigating government services and working with local organizations to locate and maintain housing. She has shared several recommendations. First, she recommends that the programs could **improve their outreach efforts**: “I’ve been on disability [for years] and had no idea [this CIL] even existed.” Second, she recommends that the programs focus on efforts to **improve coordination between the services that these different organizations offer**: ***“All the organizations that are helpful like this should work together, hand in hand. Everybody should understand what the other departments are doing. It would be more helpful to people like me and to people that aren’t intellectually aware enough of what to do.”*** Finally, **Maria recommends that the programs find ways to reduce the stigma** often associated with experiencing homelessness, having a disability, or having a substance use disorder: “There’s a lot of people in this town ... that need help, but they’re stigmatized. ... Just because we are poor, we should not be stigmatized as [a person with addiction], or whatever the case may be.”

Rafael's Experience with a Local Community-Based Organization

"This is probably, in my opinion, the future of mainstream housing because it's community-oriented and that's really helpful to your health. The other thing I really like [is] the community here and the opportunity to volunteer and stuff from here. The quality of life is good."

-Program participant Rafael

In addition to MFP programs and CILs, many local community-based organizations (CBOs) support people with disabilities. CBOs often focus on specific populations, such as people with substance use disorders, families with young children, women, or veterans. These organizations tap into public funding streams and partner with government agencies and other CBOs to serve their clients. Their services often are more expansive and tailored to their target populations and may include peer mentors, transitional housing, and permanent housing options that the organization maintains.

Rafael's Search for Housing

Rafael is a young, single man with a disabling mental health condition. He relocated from his home state, where he had been living in assisted housing, to a new state, where he hoped he would have better economic opportunities and face less discriminatory treatment. Following his relocation, Rafael experienced homelessness before connecting with a CBO dedicated to supporting people in similar circumstances. The CBO was able to help him move immediately into emergency housing, where he stayed for several weeks while he qualified for a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing voucher. However, his path to housing was not straightforward. He said, "[There were] other nonprofits in [this area] but ... honestly it was a little hard to get ahold of anybody outside of [this CBO] that would've responded easily."

Rafael reached out to the CBO before relocating to determine whether a move would be feasible. He recalls, "I knew that I needed to move ... because the stress level in [my former state] for me being marginalized was higher, and I was paranoid. It got me paranoid to the point where I had to leave the state. I liked that I can call [this CBO], and they were very kind, [saying], 'people do [move here from another state], you should—this [location] will be better for you.'" The CBO maintains permanent housing in Rafael's preferred new city for clients who qualify. His housing search, therefore, focused less on finding suitable accommodations and more on qualifying for the appropriate housing assistance and waiting for a unit to become available. Fortunately, Rafael's wait for a unit was fairly brief, lasting only about 3 weeks.

Navigating the Transition

Rafael's CBO assigned him several coordinators to support his transition process. He describes using many services, including support in paying the initial security deposit and using CBO-provided movers. Rafael describes his coordinators as helpful, if somewhat hands-off: "They have service coordinators here that gave me my keys and things [and] showed me my mailbox. I think that was about it. ... There was paperwork to do, but if I couldn't get ahold of them or they didn't call me back, when I did see them, we just did it really quick. Even the rent, the first month, they didn't really communicate with me about it. I got ahold of them, and they were like, 'Okay, fine. Let's pay it.'"

Because Rafael lives in permanent housing that the CBO maintains, many of the challenges other programs face were less prevalent, including communicating with private landlords, signing up for utilities and the internet, obtaining parking, and having access to healthcare, counseling, and enrichment services. Instead, the CBO provided many of these supportive services automatically, and Rafael has access to multiple staff who can support him in various aspects of maintaining stable housing, such as building management, social workers, and peer counselors.

Rafael also has access to a case worker who helped him set goals and connect with various opportunities that the CBO offers, such as social events and trainings. The process is holistic and person centered, and upon moving in, Rafael recalls, "One of the social workers ... asked me what my goals were. ... I told him and he said, 'That's fine.' He just wanted to check in. There's a guy who used to be a resident here. I think he's not a resident anymore, or maybe he never was, but he resonates really well with everyone ... maybe it's lived experience, but we have meetings weekly for resident check-in. Like, 'How's it going? Any complaints?' And that kind of thing ... talking about maintenance and whatever that needs to be done." Rafael has also become connected with other CBOs that offer assistance, such as free furniture and healthy food, which he has leveraged as he settles into his new home.

Ongoing Challenges and Recommendations

Rafael plans to stay in his home indefinitely, and he has begun to forge relationships and explore career opportunities in his new city. However, he is aware of the tension between taking a job and being able to maintain his housing. He explained, "I'm looking for a job right now, and the [salary] limit [to maintain his voucher] is \$63,000. I found some jobs ... that pay about \$60,000 or less, and so that's important to me because I want to work, but I know that if I were to live out on the economy and have the stresses of those things ... my mental health would probably decline because I have schizophrenia, so I could have a break. Here ... the stress is low. If the job fails, I don't lose my housing." If Rafael does earn more than the salary cap, **he is uncertain about whether he would need to leave his housing community or be able to pay a market rate.** In the meantime, he works to ensure that he can build his career while also maintaining eligibility for his housing voucher.

Rafael notes that, despite the advantages of living in permanent supportive housing, living in a housing complex that a CBO maintains instead of a private company has downsides. He stated that the setting can feel slightly undermaintained and institutional, but overall, he feels safe and comfortable.

Rafael recommends that CBOs and other programs **focus on efforts to create a sense of community to help people with disabilities maintain stable housing**: “It would be nicer if there were more [nonprofits focused on building communities]—they just seem to get [pre-tenancy and post-move-in services] down to a science to the point where you almost feel like you’re in a channel instead of in a community, so that would be helpful to feel more community.”

Lessons Learned and Implications for Service Providers

Shannon, Maria, and Rafael’s experiences share common features that offer insights into the experiences of those participating in these kinds of housing assistance programs. These key lessons from the participants’ experiences connect with many of the broader findings from these case studies and suggest implications for service providers seeking to support these populations more effectively.

“I needed to work in collaboration with my case worker. Thank God I had a case worker with my housing voucher. I wish that everybody would be able to utilize that because, for me, I needed that. I needed that structure, but not forever. I just needed that for the first 2 years of transitioning. Some people may need a shorter time, some people may need longer, but that was important to me to have that case management piece.”

-Program participant

A Holistic Case Management Approach is Highly Effective in Supporting Participants at All Phases of the Housing Process

Across the programs, participants share a great deal about the case management process, which ranged from dedicated case managers, as in Maria’s case, to a series of coordinators, as Shannon experienced, to ongoing supportive services in a community-based environment, as Rafael experienced. Most participants shared positive experiences with their case management, and many of them credited their case managers or coordinators with their positive outcomes.

Against this backdrop, a clear theme emerged across programs and participants: a more holistic approach to case management in which fewer people (ideally one person) helped to manage all of a participant's needs was more effective and easier for a participant to navigate than a more task-based approach in which different coordinators handled various parts of the pre-tenancy process.

“Steve cares a lot about people. You call Steve, Steve will call you back. If you text Steve, I don't care what time you text Steve, Steve is going to text you right back. I had to move to a lower level ... and Steve [got] right on the phone and fixed it.”

-Program participant

Participant Relationships with Staff Significantly Affect Their Experience

As the research team learned from the personal stories of Maria, Shannon, and Rafael, a participant's relationships with program staff have a significant impact on their housing search and transition experience. Furthermore, the quality of those relationships can “make or break” their experience. A negative experience, such as the one Shannon described, can cause significant emotional distress and may also slow down the housing search. A positive experience, such as Maria's, can ensure that a participant feels supported, giving them the confidence to know where to turn when encountering a housing-related problem. This kind of support may ultimately even prevent them from returning to an unstable housing situation.

Participants' Social Capital and Related Resources Affect Their Needs and Their Ability to Maintain Stable Housing

Rafael, Shannon, and Maria come from very different backgrounds, and, as such, they each had access to different types of social capital and related resources. These resources—including familial (or friend) support, access to technology, access to financial support, and education levels, particularly as they relate to understanding the housing search process—mean that participants often have very different needs during the housing search and transition process. Therefore, program staff must understand what each participant brings to the table regarding resources and social capital. This level of insight will allow them to integrate services into a person's life more ably—including insights that draw on interpersonal connections for support or safety nets that case managers can provide for those with fewer resources.

Across the programs, participants shared a variety of different backgrounds, ranging from fairly significant social and financial support, as in Shannon's case, to the opposite end of the spectrum, in which a woman who was experiencing homelessness and a substance use disorder was also caring for a young child without familial support or other resources. Each of these people had a

different starting point on their journey to finding housing, and it was important that their programs met them where they were and helped them to leverage the resources they had.

Educating Participants About Disability Rights and Housing Assistance Processes Can Lead to Increased Self-Advocacy

“I needed ... extra space due to my medical equipment. [My case manager] also helped me get a two-bedroom instead of a one-bedroom because I had a reasonable accommodation from my doctor. [The case manager] also helped me along the way with another reasonable accommodation.”

-Program participant

Several participants in the study described ways in which their case managers or related staff provided them with education about their rights as tenants with disabilities. This knowledge enabled them to better advocate for themselves with housing program staff and landlords, ultimately leading them to better outcomes in obtaining and maintaining housing. This information includes ensuring that participants are aware of their legal rights, particularly as they relate to their disability status, which may help them navigate issues, such as reasonable accommodations, accessibility modifications, and prejudicial treatment from landlords.

Developing More Appropriate Outreach Strategies Can Increase Effectiveness in Reaching Individuals with Housing Needs

Many of the interviewed participants shared somewhat circuitous and fortuitous routes to finding effective pre-tenancy support. Perhaps the most common way in which participants connected with the programs that ultimately helped them locate and transition into stable housing was through word-of-mouth—typically, through friends, family members, or other organizations. Several expressed frustrations about the time it took for them to track down information not only about housing assistance but also about programs that might be able to provide support. This difficulty raises questions about program outreach strategies and their capacity, as many programs are unable to serve everyone in their communities with relevant needs.

Conclusion

The research team conducted eight interviews with participants from six programs across the country that help people with disabilities transition into housing to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences, ensuring that participants' perspectives and recommendations contributed to the study's findings. Worth noting is that the sample size of eight is not intended to be representative of the experiences of all people with disabilities, nor were the individuals selected to be representative of the various groups served by these programs with regard to disability type, gender, age, or race. Program staff recommended the participants who spoke with the research team, and their experiences tended to be positive. Nonetheless, all individuals spoke candidly and shared both successes and challenges in their search for and transition into housing. The research team did not collect demographic information about the individuals or ask them to disclose their disabilities (although several individuals chose to share this information because it offered important context for their housing search needs). These participants represent a broad range of disability types, including physical disabilities, mental health conditions, and former substance use disorders.

Shannon, Maria, and Rafael's perspectives—and those of the other participants who took part in this study—provide invaluable context for understanding how the profiled programs operate and yield important insights for service providers and policymakers. Many of the lessons that emerged from these participants' experiences connect directly with those that other stakeholders have shared and suggest paths forward for designing services and systems of support. A notable observation is that although the focus of this study was pre-tenancy services, many participants highlighted the importance of post-move-in services—at least for a few months as they settled into their new homes.

Housing access and transition ultimately represent a means to an end, but they are not the primary goal for these programs and participants. The primary goal is to ensure that participants maintain safe, comfortable, and stable housing that meets their holistic needs. Indeed, the participants generally do not distinguish between pre-tenancy and post-move-in services when speaking about their experiences. Instead, they view their relationship with their programs as something that may be ongoing and necessary to their individual success.

For further information about the programs profiled in this brief, please access additional research from this study at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/Housing-Search-Assistance.html>.

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