

MA Autism Housing Think Tank Consensus Principle

(Crowdsourced via Facebook, July 2016)

An open Facebook page allowed participants to propose principles. Other readers could like a principle to endorse it, or reformulate into something with which they could agree. The reformulation needed to be liked to take the place of the original.

1. Autistics require a spectrum of adult living arrangements and supports.
2. Adult living arrangements for autistics should not be conditional on their being able to participate in specific types of day programs or "employment."
3. Placement in a residential setting (for those who are eligible) should be based on an individual's vision as developed using Person-Centered Planning processes; not based on the next available "bed."
4. Adults with autism need living arrangements where they can stay in their home when the support provider changes.
5. Autistic adults need to be given the opportunity to make choices about how to spend their leisure time; the food that they eat; and more. The state should provide sufficient oversight and control over agencies running 24/7 group homes to ensure clients have meaningful control over the decisions that affect their daily lives.
6. Adults with autism have the right to change their housing situation and/or provider agency and seek/receive help from the state government, if where they live; with whom they live; or the provider agency makes them feel uncomfortable or unwelcome.
7. Adults with autism have the right to have their parents act (or to select a representative, professional or otherwise, to act) as their advocates, to be their voice in achieving a high quality of life when the autistic adults live in an adult services residential setting.
 - a. The individual may choose advocates and designate them legally as such, thereby giving them the authority to be present in provider meetings. Such methods include supported decision making contracts and appointment of advocate, for example.
8. Direct support staff who work in adult services residential settings need to have much more comprehensive, extensive, mandatory training in evidence-based practices. Training should be relevant to the individuals with whom they will work, based on a person-centered planning process, and should take place prior to working with individuals.
 - a. Direct Care staff need background checks and fingerprinting.
9. Adult living arrangements for autistic adults should help them live the best life possible.
10. People with autism need housing that is designed and constructed to encourage growth and independence, minimize environmental triggers that cause decompensation, facilitate support needs, and reduce friction with housemates, neighbors, and landlords. Because home is where you should feel comfortable in your own skin.

11. When possible adults with autism who wish to be living in an integrated setting with other adults who are not autistic should be provided the appropriate supports in order to do so.
12. Those people with autism who are not safe outdoors on their own should have housing with a backyard and safety measures as deemed necessary to support the individual, so they can safely spend time outdoors.
13. Autistic adults need their living situations to provide 1.) ample options for solitude to decompress and recover from social situations, as well as 2.) the ability to regularly schedule periods of unavailability.
14. Autistic adults have a right to housing they can afford.
15. Autistic adults have a right to access public transportation regardless of where they live.
16. Autistic adults need housing options that are scalable, either by virtue of being affordable to families, attractive to a larger market, or readily incorporated into new, multifamily developments serving the broader community.
17. Adults with autism have a right to housing that allows them interact with animals and the natural world, including the ability to own pets and garden.
18. Autistic adults have a right to live in rural areas, engage in gardening, and work with animals, provided their living arrangements are separate from the location of their activities during the work day.
19. Families should be able to network openly with each other for the purpose of establishing housing opportunities.
20. Autistic adults with complex medical conditions, including those that may occasionally present as maladaptive behaviors, need housing where medical conditions and required care, along with dietary restrictions, are prioritized in the care provided at the house. Dietary considerations and medical management may require additional qualifications and training for staff, but are critical to maintaining long term wellness, reducing maladaptive behaviors, and persuading families it is safe to access housing supports.