

# INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

## Introduction

People with developmental disabilities who choose to live in the community will require permanent housing that meets their needs and provides opportunity for a quality lifestyle. Individual Program Plans are a well understood and critical factor in successful community placements, but the importance of the physical environment has been underestimated by public agencies, community placement processes, and advocates of the person-centered planning. This study reviews existing community and institutional models to better understand the role of the physical environment and to identify strategies to make better housing. Our research indicates that it is possible, through the careful planning and design, to make homes that are healthy and safe, and that eliminate obstacles, reduce restrictions and increase individual control, independence and choice. This profound shift empowers individuals with developmental disabilities and fundamentally changes their relationships with others. These supportive housing environments can be done cost effectively, and is best achieved in real homes with domestic character located in active and accepting communities.

## Research Overview

The report is based on direct field inspections and analysis, and considerable experience designing and building homes for people with developmental disabilities. The research involved visits to neighborhoods and homes, and interviews with residents, providers, advocates, owners and agency officials. The research is compiled in the case study appendix.



Resident's Ward ,Porterville Developmental Center, Porterville, California.

## Report Overview

In this report a case will be made for placing greater emphasis on the role of the physical environment in life planning for people with developmental disabilities. The report describes observations and lessons learned from 16 years of experience in the design, construction and evaluation of housing in Oregon and California. Having established this more central role of the home and the neighborhood in the lives of consumers, the report will offer suggestions for creating housing stock that meets the requirements and expectations of consumers, their supports and the public.

The report introduces the concept of housing types, which are sets of physical patterns that together create a particular environment that makes sense for and is desirable to a particular group of consumers. The types are not fixed plans or specific buildings, but flexible, responsive principles that can guide the creating of new housing.

The types – **Fully Medically Equipped, Heavy Duty Reinforced, Barrier Free Accessible, Safe and Sound, and Combined Features** – each represent particular requirements and strategies for achieving a successful person-centered environment. Line drawings illustrate the strategies. The statements and diagrams are suggestive but not prescriptive, leaving room for interpretation and improvement. The knowledge base will continually evolve to encompass best practices.

The report goes on to provide a detailed set of recommendations for an inclusive process to guide the development and construction of a person-centered environment. **Starting a project** with the decision to do a home, **stakeholders** themselves control the direction and outcome. A systematic approach guided by a knowledgeable and competent **project team** will transform **project goals** into tangible **design concepts**. Through **phases of work** design leads to buildable contract documents. Driven by a **realistic schedule**, an **adequate budget**, and an **ownership, finance and maintenance** plan, the likelihood of a **successful project** on stakeholders terms is possible.



Bob in his bedroom with his favorite things