



Coalition des familles francophones  
d'Ottawa de personnes avec  
déficience intellectuelle ou  
handicap de développement

# Lessons Learned Report

Moving to a Place of My Own!  
Project







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March 2018



**Coalition des familles francophones d'Ottawa de  
personnes avec déficience intellectuelle ou handicap  
de développement**

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This report was produced by the CFFO's *Moving to a Place of My Own!* project team:

Project Director  
**Serge Lavoie**

Housing Transition Coordinator  
**Hélène Courchesne**

Content Researcher  
**Bianca Nugent**

Other Collaborator  
**Natalie Béland**

Graphic Design and Layout  
**Pentafolio**

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CFFO: a registered charity  
(No. 84 088 5438 RR 0001)

[contact@cffo-ottawa.org](mailto:contact@cffo-ottawa.org)  
[www.cffo-ottawa.org](http://www.cffo-ottawa.org)

### **Notes to the reader:**

The term "person" is used in this report to refer to people with developmental disabilities with or without other neurodevelopmental disorders.\* This usage respects the CFFO's social inclusion values and lightens the text to facilitate reading. Similarly, the use of a single gender includes both male and female.

### **Acknowledgements**

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We would like to acknowledge the people and their families who participated in and engaged with our pilot projects. Their contributions and comments were essential in the preparation of this report. We would also like to thank the following partners for their feedback and support: the Association pour l'intégration sociale d'Ottawa (AISO), the Multidimensional Assessment of Providers and Systems (MAPS) research group, and the Regroupement des partenaires francophones d'Ottawa.

For more information or to offer any feedback:  
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\* According to the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), neurodevelopmental disorders include: developmental disabilities, specific learning disorders, motor impairment, communication disorders, autism spectrum disorders, and attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity.



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# Introduction

This report presents the lessons learned throughout the housing transition pilot project, *Moving to a Place of My Own!* This pilot project was coordinated by the Coalition des familles francophones d'Ottawa (CFFO), in partnership with other agencies in the region that serve people with developmental disabilities and their families. The project was funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) following a recommendation by the Housing Task Force, and has enabled us to collect experiences and knowledge from families, partners and allies throughout the 22 months of its implementation.

The eleven people and their families who participated have had access to funding and support from the CFFO's transition team<sup>1</sup> to help them navigate the procedures and regulations of various agencies and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The team helped participants as they gathered information about, planned and carried out their moves to appropriate housing by arranging funding agreements for housing support services.

This report describes the issues and the avenues for reflection for people and their families, stakeholders, regional coordination bodies for housing with integrated support, local agencies, government program managers, and all other individuals or groups interested in housing transition issues for people with developmental disabilities.

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1. For this project, the transition team was made up of the Transition Coordinator, who oversaw day-to-day activities, and the Project Director, who managed the project and the contractual support with participating people, their families and other stakeholders, including the MCSS.

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## Promoting the Knowledge of “Experts by Experience”

This report emphasizes the knowledge of “**experts by experience**”<sup>2</sup> in developmental disabilities, i.e. people, their families and other members of their broader circles of support. This emphasis is required in order to enhance people’s **self-determination**<sup>3</sup> in their transitions toward new living environments centered on their needs and aspirations.

The process also promoted skill building in the people who participated in the pilot project by encouraging them to take on active roles in planning and carrying out their moves.

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## New Partnerships and Community Education

From its conception in May 2015, the *Moving to a Place of My Own!* project was intended to be a collaborative initiative that would support the independence of six people as they sought support and affordable housing. In addition to providing participants and their loved ones with guidance, the project also enabled us to strengthen existing collaborative ties and forge new ones. The two initial partners (the Association pour l’intégration sociale d’Ottawa (AISO) and the Regroupement des partenaires francophones d’Ottawa) were joined by many other organizations in the Ottawa region, in Eastern Ontario and throughout the province, including: Action Housing, L’Arche Ottawa, the Ottawa-Carleton Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OCAPDD), the Orleans-Cumberland Community Resources Centre, the Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre, Service Coordination for People with Developmental Disabilities (SCS), the Durham Association for Family Respite Services (DARFS), LIGHTS Community Living Toronto, LiveWorkPlay, the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), Citizen Advocacy, and *Mouvement Personnes d’abord d’Ottawa*. We would also like to acknowledge the involvement of local representatives

2. In social sciences, the term “experts by experience” refers to a reclassification of the relationship between service providers and the people who use their services or are waiting for their services, as well as those who are dissatisfied with the services they have received, and their circles of support. This recognition of their expertise empowers them and enables them to find solutions to their own challenges. (McLaughlin, 2009).  
Reference: Hugh McLaughlin; *What’s in a Name: ‘Client’, ‘Patient’, ‘Customer’, ‘Consumer’, ‘Expert by Experience’, ‘Service User’—What’s Next?*, *The British Journal of Social Work*, Volume 39, Issue 6, 1 September 2009, Pages 1101–1117.
3. The theory of self-determination (Deci and Ryan, 2000) holds that human beings strive to satisfy three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and belonging (relationships with others), which become motivational factors, regardless of psychological developmental stage (Ryan, La Guardia et al., 2005).  
Reference: RYAN, Richard M., LA GUARDIA, Jennifer G., SOLKY-BUTZEL, Jessica, et al. *On the interpersonal regulation of emotions: Emotional reliance across gender, relationships, and cultures. Personal relationships*, 2005, vol. 12, no 1, p. 145-163.



of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP); the Passport Program; Developmental Services Ontario Eastern Region (DSO Eastern Region); the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC); Ottawa Community Housing (OCH); York Region Lifetime Independent Facilitation, the University of Ottawa research team, and other individuals and agencies not listed here who also contributed to the success of this project.

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## Knowledge Transfer

One of the main project goals was to share acquired expertise by making the *Housing Transition Guide*, the companion tools to the Guide, the best practices and the lessons learned available to all interested parties.<sup>4</sup>

The CFFO presented the results of the *Moving to a Place of My Own!* project on March 24, 2018, in Ottawa, as part of the *Journée de ressourcement du Regroupement des partenaires francophones*, which brought together parents, community members and professionals. A second information session was held on Tuesday, March 27, with Ottawa community members, in order to reach more people. The Guide, planning tools and report are all available in printed, electronic or online format on the CFFO [website](#).

Two brief surveys were launched to collect reader feedback to enable us to assess how well the Guide and lessons learned report were received. The analysis of the responses — which have not all been received yet — will enable us to confirm the utility of these resources and improve them. A report on the survey feedback will be published by the end of June 2018.

Once the project is over, comments and questions may be addressed to the *Coalition des familles francophones d'Ottawa* at the following email address: [montoit@cfo-ottawa.org](mailto:montoit@cfo-ottawa.org). As well, resources permitting, the CFFO will participate in any housing conferences it is invited to in order to share our knowledge and documents.

We hope that, once this project is completed, the knowledge transfer arising from these initiatives will lead to further advances and will facilitate access to housing for people in the Ottawa region.

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4. So that the Guide and the report may be adapted to local situations elsewhere in the province and be disseminated more broadly to contribute to the expansion of available online resources for families, agencies and the task force.





# Scope of the Project

The *Moving to a Place of My Own!* project was conducted from May 2016 to March 2018.

A service agreement was established with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) as a limited-term payment transfer agency to receive funding as of August 2016, and a project team was set up to mobilize partners. The goal of the project was to implement a pilot project, create tools, and share knowledge to enhance the independence of people and their families.

The project team drafted a guide and launched the pilot project in collaboration with other partner agencies in the Ottawa region community and elsewhere in Ontario.

The goal of the pilot projects was to support people as they transitioned to housing by offering them the greatest degree of independence possible in a safe environment in the community. A transition guide and practical tools were available as resources.

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## **A Major Coordination and Mobilization Effort**

The project involved more than 125 individual interviews and 13 group sessions with pilot project participants and their loved ones to convey relevant information; help them choose appropriate housing; find required support services; and conduct follow-up during and after the moves.

- Throughout the project, the project team also held consultations with its vast network of collaborators. These consultations were intended to inform stakeholders about the project and solicit their feedback on possible housing and support options for pilot project participants. The *Regroupement des partenaires francophones d'Ottawa* (the *Regroupement*) played a particularly critical support role.

To extend the collaboration to other sectors, the team also worked to solidify its relationships with various levels of government, professionals and private businesses.

The CFFO launched a fund-raising campaign to help people access independent housing in the community, called "[My own roof, my dream](#)." The project team also put significant efforts into grant applications.

From the beginning, the project team made sure to properly document the entire process in order to effectively assess the transition program.

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## **Project Assessment**

The assessment was conducted by professor Virginie Cobigo with Natasha Plourde<sup>5</sup> of the University of Ottawa, as well as the team, who made sure to properly document the progress of the pilot projects.

Preliminary results of the project assessment suggest some convergence with project observations, specifically that families faced numerous obstacles to achieving their housing transition projects.

The research team's data collection methods included interviews with people involved in the project, interviews with important participants in the transition planning process (for example, their parents), the project coordinator's logbook, and the meeting notes with participating families.

The final results will be presented in an assessment report to be published in June 2018 following the conclusion of collected data analysis. This data will contribute to the publication of scientific research.

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5. Virginie Cobigo is an Associate Professor in the School of Psychology at the University of Ottawa, and Natasha Plourde is a doctoral student in experimental psychology. Both are Affiliated Researchers with the Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services ([CRECS](#)) and the Multidimensional Assessment of Providers and Systems research group ([MAPS](#)).



# Pilot Project Journeys

For the pilot projects launched in October 2016, the project team worked with eleven people and their families. The participants (eleven people) were required to meet the following criteria to participate in the housing project: meet developmental disability criteria (i.e. they had to meet DSO Eastern Region eligibility criteria), live with their parent(s), and be either Franco-phone or willing to deal with agencies offering support in French.

Participants began the project engagement process by meeting with members of the transition team to discuss their interests, their motivations, and their visions of a move away from the family home. The expectations and responsibilities of all parties, including participation in individual and group meetings, commitment to participating in the project assessment, and respect for confidentiality, were also discussed at length. In addition, between March and November 2017, the team organized workshops for pilot project participants to address resources, DSO Eastern Region and service coordination, housing options, AISO, safe and healthy living at home, the Passport program, and the ODSP.

Participants were then invited to meet with the transition coordinator to work on their personalized housing processes. Individual coaching was provided to solidify each participant's housing plan vision, determine parents' level of ongoing involvement, establish and analyze each person's budget, share information about services (MCSS, DSO Eastern Region, community housing, community resource centres), and help those who needed to confirm their eligibility to various subsidy programs.

To date, thanks to the guidance and dedication of the team, seven participants have successfully moved into living environments of their choice or that are otherwise appropriate. All participants who were able to move engaged in a process founded on the principles of person-centered

planning. They each contributed, to varying degrees, to the development, testing and revision of the materials produced by the project team, while implementing their own transition plans.

Six participants chose to receive personalized support services from four service providers, funded through the CFFO project budget. Three of them now live in their own apartments; three others chose shared homes.<sup>6</sup> The seventh person accepted a spot in an MCSS-funded group home.

Of the eleven participants who started the project, four people had not moved as of the publication of this report. One of them will not be able to move, and the other three participants ran out of time and decided to put their efforts on hold for the following reasons:

- A lack of support services that would enable a resource person providing home support to live in the person's own home;
- A lack of affordable apartments in the desired neighbourhood;
- An hesitation on the part of the family to let the person leave.

The transition team also offered personalized support to participants during their moves and for a time after they had moved. This support included helping to clean the home, helping to set up new files and agreements with service providers, ensuring that people were invited to and included in meetings with service agencies, convening regular meetings, following up with circles of support, ad hoc support for unforeseen difficulties (e.g. moving personal effects for apartment fumigation), researching neighbourhood resources, preparing visual reminders (e.g. calendars and schedules), and communicating with landlords and other agencies and services.

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### Situations of Pilot Project Participants

Of the pilot project participants, seven out of eleven successfully transitioned to their own homes and received some funding for individualized support services to achieve those transitions.

The ages of participants' parents ranged from in their fifties to over 80 years old. In some cases, participants' siblings took care of the process and made decisions in consultation with other loved ones. All participants were Francophones and lived in the National Capital Region. They all wanted to live in Ottawa.

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6. A shared home is also known as living with a host family, and is a residential program whereby families and citizens open their homes to adults with developmental disabilities to offer them a home environment.



Half of the participants chose a traditional family home setting as offered by a local Francophone agency. One person opted to move in with a family with young children, and two others are sharing a home with a young couple. Two of these three participants consider this transition as a first step toward an eventual move to a more independent setting, such as an apartment.

At the time of publication, three participants had signed their first leases, with a family member<sup>7</sup> serving as guarantor. Two of them are living alone and receiving 3 to 6 hours per week of formal (and funded) support for independent living. This formal support is being provided by transfer payment agencies chosen ahead of time by each person. In addition to the temporary follow-up services provided by the project team, these people were also given access to various other forms of support, including family support, the services of an independent planning facilitator, and other support services accessed through Passport funds. Both people were already registered with the Social Housing Registry and were still waiting for subsidized housing.

The third person now shares an apartment with a residential support worker. She was receiving 17 hours of formal support per week, which were to be increased to almost 30 hours per week after a six-month trial. With the MCSS permission, the CFFO team reached a fund brokering agreement between a transfer payment agency that offers brokerage services in Eastern Ontario and the person's family so that the person and her representative could manage the funds and support themselves as required. These funds pay for personal care support workers and life skill workers to help with other day-to-day activities. Family members also provide regular assistance with funding coordination and management of support. The person is also receiving additional support services, including a case manager and an independent planning facilitator.

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## Variations in Housing Transition Processes

Throughout the process, the team observed significant variation in the levels of preparedness of participants and the degree to which they were able to take responsibility for the process.

In fact, some participants had already started planning, while others were just starting to think about it. Some had previously attempted to move,

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7. The terms "family" and "parent" encompass all forms of families or parents that a person might be surrounded with, including immediate and extended family, loved ones, friends, etc.

while others had not. The latter group likely benefitted the most from the support and coaching provided by the project.

Throughout the process, it was important for each person to participate actively in each step of the housing transition, because their perspectives were often different than those of their loved ones.

Ability to adapt and resilience also seemed to be factors that motivated people to undertake a housing transition. According to their particular situations, some participants moved despite not fulfilling all criteria; others chose not to move.

There was also variation in the frequency and intensity of the formal support required by each person. The support ranged from three hours per week of support for independent living to residential support with close to 16 hours of monitoring per day. The level of commitment and motivation to support each person's housing transition varied among families. Some families were able to contribute time and money following the person's move, while others were not. Commitment from families and loved ones following the move varied from unconditional support to independent living with active support for budget management, for example, and scheduled visits.

The attitudes of families and loved ones toward the roles of the MCSS and other agencies in supporting their sons and daughters tended toward one extreme or the other. Some families wanted to assume full control over the person's support and housing requirements, while others preferred to have an agency take care of everything.

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## Testimonials

A survey conducted in November 2017 indicated that participants and their loved ones were generally very pleased with the process. Some of the statements made are included the following:

*" This project is crucial, necessary to support families and individuals with developmental disabilities."*

*" The funds for support for independent living are essential to our son's success at living independently."*

*" Thank you for talking to my parents ahead of time to prepare them to 'let go' before the move, because for a family involved from the beginning in the life of their child... it's hard to accept."*

*" We were ready for the move, and the CFFO gave us the courage to achieve our goal."*

*“ Extraordinary support from the whole team!”*

*“ Once the date was set, everything moved very quickly and professionally. The follow-up was excellent and frequent.”*

Other participants talked about the challenges and obstacles they encountered during the process. Seven out of ten respondents found the rules and requirements of community housing assistance programs complex. Almost half had trouble filling out social housing forms. Others felt that the requirements of private landlords were too strict. Some of what they had to say along those lines are included the following:

*“ It’s hard to find affordable housing near the day program.”*

*“ I had trouble finding support workers to live with my son and provide him with support to keep him healthy and safe.”*

*“ Services are very expensive.”*

*“ Support services for my son are not yet available. I wanted an innovative solution for him: his own place with ongoing support services. For example, my son would stay in the same place through the years, and the support would evolve over time, RATHER THAN my son having to move from one place to another through the years.”*





# The Challenges

The participant-centered housing transition process revealed a number of challenges. The main challenges fall under three broad categories: **psycho-social** (the feelings, perceptions, and attitudes of the person and their loved ones about the limitations and obstacles to their planning process and independent housing transition), **structural** (the policies, rules, and procedures of the various housing bodies) and **financial** (relating to money, budgets, and the cost of services and resources).

Thanks to “experts by experience,” some of these challenges were anticipated before the project even started. For families, there was confusion surrounding the offer of residential services and housing support resources. Available information was complex. There was little planning support and no clear process for implementing a housing transition for loved ones. Families were also frustrated by the long wait times for subsidized placements.

Under these circumstances, it was important to establish the elements of a successful transition: the determination of families and the support of a professional team able to find creative solutions to deal with a long and uncertain process that is often lacking in resources.

According to notes from the CFFO pilot project, challenges that were also encountered during similar projects funded by the MCSS’s Housing Task Force included the under-funding of residential services, the difficulty of changing the system, the vulnerability of people who have to live with decisions made on their behalf, the burnout and aging of families, the lack of affordable and/or accessible housing, and the rigid and expensive offer of support services for independent living.

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## Psycho-Social Challenges

Pilot project participants were faced with psycho-social challenges throughout the housing transition and planning process. The challenges depended on their circles of support, their personal hopes and dreams, the expectations of their loved ones, their past experiences, and their level of understanding of available services.

Some pilot project participants showed a great deal of motivation and were actively engaged in the process.

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The most-motivated participants benefitted from one or more of the following factors:

- A persistent desire to move out;
- Pre-existing concrete and realistic planning, but just waiting to find funding;
- A level of understanding and involvement of loved ones regarding the system of services for people with developmental disabilities;
- Past attempts to move;
- Active siblings prepared to take over for aging parents.

Moreover, separating the issue of finding housing from the issue of support for independent living expands housing options and opens the door to solutions other than group homes. It then becomes possible to consider “traditional placements” or independent settings, like an apartment. In cases requiring 24/7 support, the challenge is to find adequate resources, including funding to cover the costs of paid support services.

At the beginning of planning the move, some participants and their loved ones favoured the idea of apartment sharing to reduce housing and support costs. Apartment sharing has some advantages, but it also comes with a number of challenges.

For starters, the roommates must be compatible. Furthermore, their loved ones also have to get along, because they will have to work together on a long-term basis. Even with a shared vision and solid commitment, it can be difficult to get everyone to agree both before and after the move.

From another point of view, some parents had invested significant time and energy into the transition process. For these parents, the pilot project offered a unique opportunity to obtain the necessary funding. Without the project, they would have had to wait even longer — an untenable situation, especially for families with older parents. For them, the project was vital, because the idea of their adult children returning home was impossible,



as they themselves were often planning to move out of their homes. This was less of a concern for younger parents, some of whom were open to the possibility of a return to the family home if necessary.

Some families were looking for tailor-made, innovative solutions, rarely offered by agencies, such as having a personal support worker living with the person. One family wanted to personally oversee the coordination of support for their adult offspring after their move by setting up direct funding. Others were not able to find suitable living conditions. The issue of setting up direct funding was raised and is a subject that merits further consideration.

Pilot project participants also reiterated the importance of the natural circle of support (family, loved ones and friends). Their support is vital during the planning phase and throughout the transition process. It is a major success factor, especially if loved ones share the person's vision of the move and respect their hopes and dreams.

Without the support of family members and other loved ones, it is much more difficult for a person to achieve their move.

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## Structural Challenges

Any time participants and their loved ones tried to work with the levels and structures of the system, they were inevitably confronted with unyielding policies, regulations and procedures that became serious structural challenges. For example, MCSS does not provide funding for anything that falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Housing, which receives funding from all three levels of government.

Or, if a person moves into a shared home with integrated residential support and receives funding for support, they are entitled to that funding as long as they stay within the same agency (e.g. AISO). Otherwise, they will lose the funding. Likewise, if a person receives a subsidy for support services for independent living, the subsidy will continue as long as they meet the initial criteria, such as living in the geographic area served by the agency.

Because the funds allocated to a person come from the agency, it is the agency that determines eligibility criteria. If the person needs to change agencies because of a move, they will lose their funding and will need to go back onto a wait list, such as that of Developmental Services Ontario (DSO), to get new funding. Clearly, it would be preferable for allocated funding to follow the person, regardless of which agency is providing the support.

The Ministry of Housing does fund various low-income housing projects, but its budget envelope does not account for the support needs of adults with developmental disabilities. The Social Housing Registry of Ottawa does not consider these people as high priority cases for affordable housing. The Registry is already managing a waiting list based on several other priority social emergencies such as battered women, Indigenous people, refugees, people experiencing homelessness, and people with mental illnesses.

In fact, people with developmental disabilities are the victims of systemic obstacles, social discrimination, and frequent abuse because of their vulnerability. Because they must answer to multiple stakeholders and justify their expenses frequently, their fields of action are even more limited. Finally, they also are often not given a voice to make their preferences known.

During the implementation of service agreements, agency employees found it pleasant to work with young, enthusiastic people and their families who had already defined their wishes and dreams and who were ready to act.

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## **Financial Challenges**

People with developmental disabilities receive about half as much financial aid as do adults with physical disabilities. As a result, their situation is all the more precarious. The maximum limit for rental rates in the Ottawa region, they can afford, is between \$700 and \$800 per month (heating and electricity included), while income support is less than \$1,200 per month. Moreover, provincial scales established by ODSP allocate \$489 for housing. At this time, there is no housing available in Ottawa for this price, with the exception of single rooms, shared apartments or shared homes. To have any hope of securing affordable housing, people must make up the difference with community programs and other subsidies for low-income people.

Most participants' families were open to all options, including renting or purchasing a building or a condo. For some, a condo might have been suitable, but they wanted to share support costs with a roommate to reduce the cost of home support services, which can add up to thousands of dollars annually, depending on frequency and intensity.

In the Ottawa region, funds allocated to support for independent living or residential support are not generally managed directly by a person and their family. This responsibility is usually mandated by the Ministry to transfer payment agencies through their programs. This option was used by one of the people who moved during the pilot project. More details on this case are presented in the Lessons Learned section.

One of the other potential funding sources is the Passport program. These funds are not very useful for housing transition, but they can have a significant impact on other elements of life to ensure that people are not left completely isolated.

The trouble with the [Passport program](#) is that the funding it provides may be reduced when a person moves, because the amounts allocated to respite for natural support are often reduced or cut entirely. To make matters even worse, people won't know if their funds will be cut until after they move, which leaves them with a great deal of uncertainty. Some people interested in moving have been hesitant for this reason.



*Stéphane loves his new apartment and regularly accesses ParaTranspo's services to help him get around the community.*



# Lessons Learned

Throughout the project, we asked people and organizations to share their observations and lessons learned from their experiences, as well as the main challenges arising from the housing transition.

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## Observations Related to People and Their Families

- 1) Many people want to move, but they don't know where to start. Coaching is required to start the process. The starting point is when a person and their family decide that they want to initiate a change and they start looking for support.
- 2) The lack of financial means is problematic and a major challenge, both in obtaining and managing funding.
- 3) Most people wait too long before starting the planning process and are not ready quickly enough to make the transition.
- 4) Several families are concerned about moving forward. They like the pilot project but wish that the coaching could continue both for themselves and for other families in the community.
- 5) Families must stay on top of changes to funding program criteria, as they can contain problematic clauses. For example, following a move, the Passport program may reduce or remove the "respite portion." Parents must stay vigilant about such issues.

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## Observations Related to the Social and Community System

- 1) This project made the CFFO realize that we should be more proactive with the networks linking the Ministry of Community and Social Services with agencies that offer support services, associations, and family

groups, in order to contribute more on behalf of our members and to benefit from information sharing and partnerships.

- 2) The laws, regulations, and policies regarding individual funds for private purchases of services are imprecise and hard to access. For example, regulations regarding the administration of group homes do not even mention the purchase of services by individuals.
- 3) Access to subsidized housing does not prioritize people with developmental disabilities. We will see if the National Housing Strategy: “A place to call home” will correct the situation in the short or long term.

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### **Observations Related to Resources**

- 1) At the beginning of the project, its duration and post-pilot status were uncertain. For this reason, some families chose not to move, because, before May 2017, there was no information on the long-term funding status.
- 2) Some people objected to the fact that allocated support funds were not paid directly to the people, because this complicated the purchase of private services. Due to existing regulations, this situation cannot be changed at this time.
- 3) Several families were very concerned by the lack of affordable housing in their neighbourhoods and by funding levels that do not align with the cost of living and rentals in Ottawa.
- 4) Organizations representing families and people have few opportunities to participate in provincial activities to advocate for people’s self-determination and to promote their social inclusion.
- 5) The formula used by the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to calculate housing allowances is based on median rental rates across Ontario. This does not work for Ottawa. Would it be possible to use another metric?

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### **Observations Related to the Option of a Fund Brokering Agreement**

- 1) To set up a fund brokering agreement, as explained earlier, a person’s representative must open a separate bank account for the brokering funds. They must produce and submit quarterly expense reports to the brokerage agency with copy to the CFFO. The representative must



register with the Canada Revenue Agency as an employer of residential support workers, which requires paying social benefit deductions, including the Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, and Workplace Safety Insurance. The process requires serious effort and is not feasible for all families.

- 2) The administration of the funds intended for people, although arduous, did ultimately work. The agency offering the brokerage service took a small percentage of the allocated funds to administer the accounts and ensure compliance with Ministry requirements. The CFFO team made sure that the person was satisfied with the services and how they worked. It also oversaw compliance with the Agreement. The team made monthly payments in parallel with post-move coaching.

This mode of operation enabled the CFFO and other stakeholders to reassess the needs of a person who had moved and to make required adjustments while keeping the MCSS in the loop.

- 3) Although setting up the Agreement was challenging, the person has been living happily in her two-bedroom apartment for more than six months. A support worker lives with her and prepares her meals, reminds her to take her medications, and helps with other day-to-day activities. Other members of her circle of support help her do her laundry, arrange visits with her friends, reserve ParaTranspo, and accompany her to medical appointments scheduled before the brokering agreement was concluded. There was a learning curve for the person, her representative, and her circle of support. However, they now understand how to set up and manage this type of arrangement.
- 4) This family believes that it would be helpful to have a local agency available to offer brokerage services in the Ottawa region. Such an agency could offer various support services such as accounting services, templates (e.g. announcements, regulations, hiring tips), professional development for employees, etc. according to needs identified by families.

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## **Preliminary Observations Related to the Project Assessment**

- 1) For their assessment project,<sup>8</sup> the researchers examined the obstacles and facilitators encountered, the information sources and tools used, and the decision-making processes of people and their families through a number of interviews conducted between November 2017

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8. Cobigo, V. & Plourde, N. (2018). *Évaluation du projet «Passage vers mon propre toit!»* Ottawa, Ontario: Authors.

and February 2018. Participation in the assessment was voluntary. The perspectives of seven of the eleven families will be represented in the preliminary report. Respondents included ten parents or sets of parents and three people themselves.

- 2) The families involved shared their stories and experiences. They reported a high level of satisfaction with the type of support they received from the transition team and other stakeholders. Several families emphasized the importance of having the person himself or herself initiate the transition to a new home and that the person should be at the heart of all planning. For some families, it was clear that the pressure of the project timelines forced some people to accept available options rather than stay on a wait list for decades.
- 3) The testimonials gathered indicate that the major assets of the project were financial support, planning support, facilitation, access to relevant information, and sharing experiences with other families. Noted barriers included those that prevented more innovative projects from coming to fruition, because the current system is not set up to offer “tailor-made” solutions.
- 4) Going forward, it would be worthwhile to examine various issues from the angle of Francophones in a minority setting. The participating families were Francophone and all lived in Anglophone majority areas. It is important to determine whether this had any impact on the planning process and the short-term outcomes.

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### **Observations Related to the Project**

- 1) The proposed timelines were too optimistic to complete a move during the first year, especially with no guarantee of continuity. A planning process usually takes two years. The project team had to really accelerate the process, especially when funds were not received until four months into the first fiscal year.
- 2) The advice and support of the MCSS program supervisor were very much appreciated throughout the project.
- 3) The funds budgeted for people’s support in the initial CFFO proposal were not sufficient to meet the needs of the participants, who needed various levels of support (from light to quite extensive). Fortunately, the allocated funds nevertheless enabled us to complete six moves during the last seven months of fiscal year 2017–2018, which was the objective for that year.

- 4) Given that it would have been impossible to include all possible housing transition situations in the Guide, we took a holistic approach.
- 5) For a housing transition to be sustainable, it must be flexible, allow for a certain degree of risk, and involve teamwork to ensure the person's well-being. Tools are useful, but they must be supported by imagination and dedication.
- 6) Efforts to augment available funding for pilot project participants via philanthropy unfortunately did not produce positive results.
- 7) Going forward, it is unfortunate that the information and external references in the *Housing Transition Guide* are constantly changing. The issue of continuity of services deemed useful after the conclusion of the project came up frequently.
- 8) Surveys of readers of the Guide and the Lessons Learned Report should provide more information.

# Notes

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# Possible Ways to Improve the Process

As this project comes to a close, we would like to propose some adjustments that could improve the process. Despite the existence of the Housing Transition Guide, in most cases, a person is dependent on the decisions of their parents and immediate circle. With the CFFO project material and other supports in hand, a person and their family should be able to consider a number of possible actions.

The CFFO would like to see society and existing social and community system entities offer more options that would enable people with developmental disabilities to be valued and recognized for their contributions.

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## For Parents and Families

Parents can experience a form of mourning after a move and may worry about the process. They must also do their own planning for the future (wills, trusts, other financial considerations). Parents should learn from the experiences of other parents and people, as there are plenty of people happy to share their stories. It is up to us to find ways of facilitating these dialogues.

As well, people and families can help each other find points of contact within ministries and organizations, e.g. the Ministry of Health for physical needs, the LHINs, mental health services in cases of dual diagnosis, the City of Ottawa and possible subsidies, etc.

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## For the Community

Community circles (schools and other community circles) should encourage parents to start discussing independence with their children around

The CFFO would like to see society and existing social and community system entities offer more options that would enable people with developmental disabilities to be valued and recognized for their contributions.

the age of 12 years. The thinking process is very long and should start well before this stage, which generally comes up between the ages of 21 and 30 years. The earlier you start, the less it will cost the system later, and the greater the person's chances of achieving independence.

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### **For Social and Community System Entities**

Despite existing programs, there is a great deal of uncertainty and concern regarding the availability of resources to support people's self-determination and independence.

This project shows that, with the commitment and drive of a group of families, a variety of moving projects can be carried out in various ways, even if the person's thinking process should start much earlier.

Despite existing programs, there is a great deal of uncertainty and concern regarding the availability of resources to support people's self-determination and independence.







## Conclusion

According to participating families, the knowledge acquired and outcomes achieved through the project confirm that a person-centered approach is essential. It enables people to take charge of their own destinies as full and complete citizens. To achieve this, however, social policies and programs, as well as service delivery models, must be updated to facilitate housing transitions – “like my brother, my sister, my friend.”

In many cases, these vulnerable people with little money would be best served by simplifying access to affordable housing in the Ottawa region through improved collaboration.

Informal discussions, an internal survey, and an external assessment indicated that participant satisfaction is high with the pilot project *Moving to a Place of My Own!*, and that participants are grateful to the team, to workers, and to the families involved. The project confirmed the importance of concentrating on the needs of the person, and that interactions among the various participants make it possible to find new solutions.

The exercise also revealed that we should do more to encourage families and other stakeholders to start the housing planning process, and likely also the employment planning process, before the person reaches 21 years of age.

It would be valuable to continue offering housing transition coaching services like those provided during the pilot project.

Thanks to this project, several families are now better informed about the considerations and measures required to formulate a plan, make decisions, and support their loved one’s move. In the longer term, the CFFO would like to be able to extend these successes to help more Francophones.

The material produced through this project is available to everyone. Anyone is free to make reference to it and use it by adapting any sections that are not relevant.

Finally, we should determine how to sustain this experience. Parents and families feel that their association, the CFFO, should play a bigger role in this matter to ensure that the needs and preferences of people are maintained and respected.







**Coalition des familles francophones  
d'Ottawa de personnes avec  
déficience intellectuelle ou  
handicap de développement**

**MARCH 2018**