




A Project of The Women and Girls Foundation 

The Women and Girls Foundation launched the Training Regional Advocates to Influence Leadership (TRAIL) program in 2020, in collaboration with Dr. Josie Badger. The goal of the program is to develop a statewide legislative advocacy training program for people with disabilities. TRAIL supports advocates with disabilities in learning strategies to make systemic change.

Recommendations represent the ideas of TRAIL members and do not represent those of the Women and Girls Foundation or any partners. For additional information please contact Dr Josie Badger at Josie@JBadgerConsultingInc.org

WRITTEN BY:

Alyssa Walker has been a TRAIL member since 2021. She works as a shelter advocate at ARISE domestic violence Shelter and attended Bethel College.

Braden Walker has been a TRAIL member since 2020. He currently works for DON, the CIL, and attended Grace College.

Rachel Shandler has been a TRAIL member since 2020. She is currently working for SPAN, Parent Advocacy Network. Rachel graduated from Edinboro University.

Housing for Pennsylvanians with Disabilities


Homelessness

- Among adults, 17.7% of the U.S. population had a disability whereas an estimated 42.8% of sheltered homeless adults had a disability. A disability, particularly one relating to substance abuse or mental health issues, can make it difficult to work enough to afford housing.

Home Rental

- Overall, 7 million renters with disabilities are moderately or severely cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their income on rent and are therefore more likely to face [eviction](#).
- 48% of extremely low-income renter households are seniors or disabled, and another 43% are in the labor force, in school, or are single-adult [caregivers](#).
- As of 2017, 1.7 million Pennsylvanians, comprising 14% of the population, live with a disability. Considering that 17% of Pennsylvania's population is 65 or older as of 2017, and that approximately half of this segment of the population lives with a disability (e.g., ambulatory, self-care, and independent living difficulties), and a third lives in housing built before 1950, there is a need to substantially renovate the [housing stock](#).



A Project of The Women and Girls Foundation 

Housing for Pennsylvanians with Disabilities *Policy Recommendations*

Make Pennsylvania a “Community First State”

- Currently, the default is to place elders and individuals with disabilities in residential programs instead of supporting their needs to allow them to remain in their homes and communities. Pennsylvania should support community development and keeping families together.
- Create an intergovernmental council and an oversight commission consisting of professionals and community members with disabilities that will oversee the housing issues facing people with disabilities, create an annual public report, and work with the state to develop recommendations.

Support first-time home owners with disabilities to pay down payments

- Many individuals with disabilities rely on public benefits such as Social Security or Medicaid. Most public benefits have an income and asset limit for individuals to be able to stay on these services, preventing individuals from saving enough money to pay for a down payment.
- Work with PASS and ABLE accounts to improve their ability to support housing down payments.
- Create grants to support first time home owners with disabilities to pay down payments

Improve access to home modifications or education about currently available programs

- Available home modifications and funding can be difficult to locate and time intensive.
- Work with HUD, housing providers, Centers for Independent Living, and waiver coordination entities to: address the lack of accessible housing and work with individuals to find or update their homes to be accessible ultimately preventing institutional care or homelessness
- Ensure that state-funded home modifications are completed in a timely way

Prepare for Emergencies

- Supporting individuals with disabilities during emergency is often an afterthought creating an unsafe environment for the individual and care providers.
- Create an emergency fund to prevent people with disabilities from becoming homeless
- Ensure that shelters and emergency evacuation shelters are fully accessible

Incentive for any landlord providing accessible accommodations

- Landlords are hesitant to modify their facilities due to presumed expense and a lack of knowledge.
- Develop incentives for any landlord providing accessible housing options and landlords who are renovating inaccessible units to become more accessible.

Paid Family and Medical Leave

- A large percent of workers with disabilities, live paycheck to paycheck. Having a safety net for when an emergency occurs can be only thing keeping them from living on the streets.