

DISABILITY TASK FORCE MEETING—June 16, 2022
HOUSING OPTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES SUMMARY

On June 16th the DTF met and a panel of experts discussed housing options for people with disabilities in Massachusetts, addressing strategies to obtain housing and strengthen the system.

Panel Members included:

- **Catherine Boyle, president of Autism Housing Pathways** and a commissioner of the Winchester Housing Authority
- **Andrew Forman, Senior Disability Advocate at the Boston Center for Independent Living** since 2001, focusing on housing and other issues.
- **Megan Sandel MD, MPH, Associate Professor Pediatrics Boston University**, Co-Lead Children’s Health Watch and the Co-Director Grow Clinic at Boston Medical Center

After panel presentations, there was a Q&A and discussion with DTF members.

- Cathy Boyle president of Autism Housing Pathways and a commissioner of the Winchester Housing Authority provided an overview of housing options for people with disabilities, with a focus on housing for people with autism. She addressed the unmet need for supported housing and estimates that annually 625-650 people with autism need housing beyond what is funded through DDS and MassHealth. Cathy provided an overview of the three programs funded by the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation: Community Based Housing (CBH) Fund; the Facilities Consolidation Fund (FCF); and the Housing Innovations Funds (HIF). CEDAC does not fully address current housing needs. Cathy discussed the need for zoning reform legislation to allow families to create accessory dwelling units, and the need for technical assistance to help families with the complex process of applying for subsidized housing and vouchers. Cathy also addressed staffing shortages due to low wages and the pandemic, and the concern that individuals with housing are unable to utilize authorized support hours. The Commonwealth will soon be rolling out remote supports. Finally, she addressed issues facing individuals with disabilities who are aging and who will need different housing support models for continued independent living. Click here to review Cathy’s [slides](#)
- Dr. Megan Sandel, Associate Professor Pediatrics Boston University, Co-Lead Children’s Health Watch and the Co-Director Grow Clinic at Boston Medical Center focused on four housing issues with can impact health: quality, stability, affordability, and location. Many individuals face untenable choices, having to “trade off” quality of unit, location and affordability, which directly impacts health of many individuals with disabilities. Dr. Sandel discussed the process for seeking “reasonable accommodations” to ensure that individuals with disabilities obtain accessible housing in light of their medical and disability related needs. She emphasized the importance of obtaining letters from the individual’s physician to document medical and disability-related housing needs, and she also provided strategies to help ensure that physician letters are written in an effective manner. Click [here](#) to view reasonable accommodation letter
- Andy Forman, Senior Disability Advocate at the Boston Center for Independent Living talked about the housing resources and supports available through the Boston Center for Independent Living. Andy discussed a range of housing options, including section 8 housing, which includes

tenant-based vouchers and project-based vouchers; public housing; private housing, and subsidized housing. Andy emphasized the need for individuals to complete as many housing applications as possible, given the very long wait lists. Geographic flexibility is helpful as well, because waitlists in the Boston area can be as long as 10-13 years. Language access barriers for individuals and families whose primary language is not English were also discussed. BCIL is advocating for more housing options and encourages DTF members to get involved.

Click [here](#) for resources

Click [here](#) for slides

Click [here](#) for recording

Click [here](#) for reasonable accommodation letter