



INDEPENDENT
APARTMENT
COMMUNITIES

WELCOME!

IAC's In Depth: Aaron Vorell

The need for and benefit of independent apartment communities

According to the United States' Congress (in PL.101-136:The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990):

“Historically, society has tended to isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities, and, despite some improvements, such forms of discrimination against individuals with disabilities continue to be a serious and pervasive social problem.”



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Increasingly advocates and legislators are pushing to end any kind of housing and service options that resemble a restrictive or isolative environment. While we would all agree adults with disabilities shouldn't be isolated or "institutionalized" there is much disagreement on what these terms mean and what program/housing options lead to isolation.



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“The Pendulum Swing”



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Two seldom acknowledged synonyms of “Independence”

ISOLATION

&

VULNERABILITY



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What is the IAC Group?

The IAC is an association of organizations, professionals, families and individuals that believe that Independent Apartment Communities represent a unique, beneficial and preferred option for housings and supports for those individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The IAC exists to offer education, resources, networking and support for those that want to create Independent Apartment Communities in their local area and to support existing Independent Apartment Communities to best fulfill their mission in a sustainable and person centered focus. Independent Apartment Communities are a unique and very successful model.



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What is an IAC?

An IAC refers to a housing and supported service model specifically directed to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). An IAC combines many unique aspects that often are not found in traditional or common housing and supported service models throughout the United States (see 10 distinctives). IAC's represent a unique, beneficial and often preferred option for housings and supports for those I/DD.

There are 3 main aspects to an IAC.



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A foundational value for any housing and support model for those with I/DD should be Independence. Independence is central to all efforts supporting those with I/DD because it recognizes and is committed to the idea that each person should be enabled to live their life in a manner that is as free as possible from the control or unwanted influence of others. As it relates the first word in an IAC, Independent describes the type of program an IAC is committed to.

For any IAC, there isn't just one program being offered- instead there is a separate program for each person, each as unique as the person's fingerprint.



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Each residents supports are tailored to their desires and needs and no two program plans look the same. An IAC's support commitment should reflect the following statement, "An IAC should do everything it can for each resident within their scope of services; Always working to give each person the support they need; Willing to be creative and stretched for the residents benefit; While also maintaining safety, professional boundaries and common sense for the good of the organization."

Independent represents the commitment of an IAC to not give in to a "one size fits all" approach, but to show the inherent worth of each person by being committed to tailoring supports in a way that is responsive, considerate of needs and open to new ideas.



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Of critical importance to any IAC is that each resident has their own front door keys and independent choice with things like running their heating/AC, installing cable TV, internet, phone and any other utilities they desire to use. Ideally there is the option for no shared bedrooms or bathrooms, something that is critical to offering privacy, dignity and a sense of independence. These living options are unfortunately very rare for most adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Most often in an IAC the apartments are not owned, but each resident can make it their own by painting or furnishing it as they see best. Residents of an IAC have their own lease agreement with all the rights afforded in any tenant/landlord relationship. All residents have their own key to the buildings common front doors, which are locked after hours to help ensure safety and privacy for all the residents. Unlike your typical apartment complex, each neighbor in an IAC has chosen to live in a community where they can get support as needed from the on-site staff 24 hours a day.



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The most unique and likely beneficial part of an IAC is represented by the word **Community**. For many individuals with I/DD and their family's isolation, loneliness and vulnerability are the biggest challenges when it comes to long term housing and support. Living alone or "independently" are often presented as the pinnacle of success but a less talked about byproduct is often isolation, loneliness and vulnerability. For most adults an IAC would support there are far reaching difficulties in creating and sustaining meaningful friendships. That difficulty often coupled with many living environments that foster few opportunities for socialization with multiple people tends to lead to being alone, both physically but also just as important emotionally.



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All relationships grow best with quantity time- being able to get to know people through shared interests, activities and experiences. Adults with disabilities are no different, though they often benefit from even more time to “rub shoulders” and form meaningful relationships. As important as the quantity social time is it’s hard to create artificially. In an IAC, community is built it. The ongoing social opportunities and support are often referred to as “a community within a community”, where residents have the ability to create meaningful friendships through social contact and program opportunities while also still being connected to the outside community on a daily basis. This unique combination allows for a true sense of community and relationships – A place to belong!



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Independent Apartment Community Distinctives

- 1) Offer housing and support services for adults with development and intellectual disabilities.
- 2) The programming and supports offered by the IAC are comprehensive, optional, individualized, flexible and person centered.
- 3) Any IAC will be dedicated to not creating any community rules that limit individualization and person centered plans and freedom of each resident.
- 4) Individual apartments in the building with no shared bedrooms or bathrooms.
- 5) A building with a shared front door to access the apartment community.



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Independent Apartment Community Distinctives

- 6) All residents have their own building front door and apartment key and can access the building and their apartment independently at any time.
- 7) Common areas that create social opportunities in a safe and responsive environment.
- 8) Shared meals offered in order to create a “family dining” experience.
- 9) 24 hour staffing is provided as a part of an IAC.
- 10) Any IAC will offer a lease agreement with all the legal protection of any landlord/tenant agreement.



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“But won't IAC's isolate adults with I/DD from the community?”

“Don't IAC's represent a return to the days of institutionalization and force segregation?”

“Isn't an IAC illegal?”

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Objectives for IAC Symposiums

- 1) To offer successful examples of IAC's and serve to cast vision for those not familiar with Independent Apartment Communities.
- 2) To provide education, resources and offer best practices on how to build, fund and operate an Independent Apartment Community.
- 3) To offer networking opportunities and consulting for those interested in being a part of an Independent Apartment Community in their local area.

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4 Key Points for IAC Symposiums

1) There is a critical shortage of housing and support communities that adequately address the individualized needs of adults with I/DD. IAC's represent a unique and exceptional option to this crisis.

2) While many families and professionals see an IAC as an unattainable but superior model, the actual barriers for families and professionals creating their own IAC are more realizable and attainable than previously thought. Through the information, insight and long term consulting options available through the IAC Group creating a new IAC can go from a dream to a reality.



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4 Key Points for IAC Symposiums

3) The staffing structure of an IAC offers flexibility and a wealth of skillsets that allow a more varied and robust program. This in turn gives the opportunity for IAC's to readily create new and needed programs and opportunities for the individualization and optimal benefit of the residents/clients.

4) In order for a new IAC to get started its often critical that multiple people/groups collaborate to allow for the various aspects needed to start an IAC. The IAC symposium represents an ideal setting for collaboration and networking as people identify the different “pieces of the puzzle” needed for the creation of an IAC.

