



PACE, Inc.

Fact Sheet : **Mental Illness and Housing**

The housing needs of people with mental illness may not appear very different from the housing needs of any other population. What sets the needs of people with mental illness apart are:

- _ The urgency and degree of necessity of accommodating features
- _ The specificity with which environmental factors promote or hamper mental health
- _ The issue of cost

People with mental illness, like most people with disabilities, are over represented in low income brackets. Limited or fluctuating income may make affordability itself an access issue. Additionally, the resources of people with mental illness may be strained due to:

- _ Medical debt
- _ Out-of-pocket pharmacy expenses
- _ Payment for non-traditional therapies
- _ Consequences of disability-related excesses, compulsions, or disorganized decisions

Without environmental modification based on the individual with mental illness's needs, housing may never feel like "home," and may be only precariously maintained.

Environmental factors that may jeopardize housing include:

- _ Lack of safety and or privacy
- _ Too much space for the individual to clean or organize
- _ Too few closets, shelving or organizational systems to neatly hold all belongings
- _ Lack of appropriate proximity/access to resources related to self-care, such as laundry facilities, garbage disposal, grocery store, or affordable transportation

On the other side of this page is a checklist of environmental elements people with mental illness might consider when thinking about housing. For many people with mental illness, it is important to consider:

- _ The sensory environment
- _ The physical environment
- _ Environmental resources
- _ Life-Affirming resources
- _ Adapting resources

Choosing and arranging environmental conditions to promote mental health can mean the difference between "being housed," and "being at home." **For additional information about housing or disability, contact PACE: (217) 344-5433 voice, (217) 344-5024 TTY, (217) 344-2414 Fax.**

FACT SHEET: Mental Illness and Housing Checklist of Environmental Elements for Consideration

Sensory Environment

- How much noise can be heard from the street?
- How much noise can be heard from neighbors?
- How much privacy do you have to make noise?
- Is some part of the scenery pleasing to you?
- Can you smell cigarette smoke, garbage, animal droppings or factory emissions when windows are open?
- Does the living space have enough natural light?
- Do you have freedom of movement within the living space?
- Do security lights, headlights or street lights shine into the living space?

Physical Environment

- What is the character of the neighborhood? (Elders, singles, college students, families)
- What are the safety features? (Lights, security door, secure window and door locks, clear view around front door, proximity to neighbors, peephole, etc.)
- Is there convenient, affordable parking? Is there a convenient bike rack?
- Is there ready access to a bus route?
- Is the residence visitable or accessible?
- Is the residence set back from the street?
- Is the residence near a busy street?
- Is there space/shelving/cabinetry to neatly hold majority of your possessions?
- Can you manage and maintain the living space? Will upkeep be difficult?
- Is there privacy? Is there room to take care of yourself?
- If you are renting, does the landlord give 24 hours notice before entering the premises?
- Do you need air-conditioning?
- Is there room to be creative? (Cook, construct, paint, move, play, sew, write, entertain)

Environmental Resources

- Is the residence near helping resources? (Pharmacy, hospital, friends/family, counselor)
- Are there employment or volunteer opportunities nearby?
- What is the proximity to the following:
 - Laundry machines Pharmacy
 - Place to empty trash Place to buy groceries
- If depression is frequent, do you need on-site or same floor laundry facilities?

Life-Affirming Resources

- How close is the living space to the following:
Library? Friends/Family? Park/ Recreation? Video store/Theatre? Post Office? Safe walking routes?
- Is the residence landscaped? Can you garden on-site?
- Who is responsible for yard work such as snow and leaf removal and lawn mowing?
- Is the area pet friendly?
- Is there a place to sit outside?

Adapting Resources

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| Ear plugs | Exercise machine | Appropriate lighting for tasks | |
| Eye mask | Shelving | Shopping service | |
| Heavy drapes | Organizing system | Personal Assistant | |
| White noise machine | Reachers | Use of entitlement benefits | Meaningful activity |
| Light box | Window boxes | Use of free/low cost goods | Resource guides |
| Aroma sources | Kitchen herb garden | Adaptive equipment | Self-Advocacy |