



nhcdd

NH Council on Developmental Disabilities

Transition Planning:

Where do you want to live after
high school?

Housing

Where to live after High School

This handbook does not constitute legal advice. This handbook aims to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of The Council. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.

Now that you are an adult, its time to decide where to live. This is a big decision. You have the right to live in the least restrictive, most integrated setting that meets your needs. That means you can live in any setting you choose. There are many different options, here are a few:

- With family
- With friends
- On your own
- In a host home
- In a group home

Should I live with family?

Many young adults choose to live with family, at least to start. Living with family has a lot of benefits. Once you are an adult, your family might expect you to help by contributing some money. Even if they do, it is usually much cheaper than living on your own. Also, your family knows what you need, and they and their home may be set up better to meet your needs for the time being.

Some young adults live at home to save up money to get their own place in the future. Some live at home while they learn skills to help them live on their own. There are organizations that can help you develop skills to live on your own.

Do I need support services?

Centers for Independent Living teach independent living skills. Granite State Independent Living (GSIL) is New Hampshire's only independent living center. You can find them here: <https://gsil.org/>

Long-Term Support Services help individuals with disabilities in their day to day lives. You may be eligible for benefits that include home modification, non-medical transportation, consumer directed services, and in home support services. These benefits are provided through the Medicaid waiver system. More information about the programs and eligibility can be found here: <https://drcnh.org/disability-issue-areas/medicaid-and-healthcare/cfi-hcbs-waiver-programs/>



Should I rent my own place?

Some young adults rent their own place or rent a place with friends. If you are considering renting an apartment, room, or house there are some questions you will want to ask yourself:

- **Can I afford it?** Rental prices are getting more expensive, so you should think about if you can afford a place even if the price goes up next year too. Having a roommate or two might help in affording the cost of rent, but be sure they are people you trust with stable income. You will be counting on them to pay part of the rent, and you will be sharing a living space with them.
- **Am I eligible?** Landlords often require the rent to be no more than 30% of what you earn. They will often require you to show a state ID or driver's license. They may also require a credit check that shows a good credit score. You get a good credit score by having a history of using credit cards, buying cars, or other things you pay off over time, and paying those bills on time. A landlord may also charge you a fee to apply for the apartment.
- **Where do I want to live?** Location can be very important for things like easy access to a bus line, being close to work, or being close to service providers.
- **What do I need to live in a rental comfortably?** Do you need a wheelchair accessible apartment? Do you need a quiet space? If so, renting an apartment that can provide those things might be important for you.

Can I get financial help to rent my own place?

There are services that can help you afford to rent your own apartment.

Public and subsidized housing. If you qualify, there may be public or subsidized housing options for you. However, there are long waiting lists for these options. More information can be found here: https://www.hud.gov/states/new_hampshire

Housing Choice Voucher Program. Housing vouchers can assist in paying part of rent depending on your income. In order to receive housing vouchers, you need to apply and qualify. More information can be found here: <https://www.nhhfa.org/rental-assistance/housing-choice-voucher-program/apply/>

Section 811 Housing. The Section 811 program allows persons with disabilities to live as independently as possible in the community by subsidizing rental housing opportunities which provide access to appropriate supportive services. More information can be found here: <https://www.nhhfa.org/asset-management/staying-in-compliance/section-811/>



How do I find a place to rent?

You should be prepared to make lots of calls, and understand that the search may take a while. Right now, there is a housing shortage in the Granite State. This means there are more people looking for places to live than there are open places to rent/buy. This can make searching for a place to rent take a long time and require a lot of work on your part.

There are many different websites where you can search for apartments, rooms, or houses to rent. Different websites specialize in different types of rentals so be aware of that when you are searching. You want to keep in mind that if you qualify for one of the programs discussed above, you may be limited in where you can live because not every place accepts vouchers. Your public housing authority should have a list of places that take Housing Choice Vouchers in your area.

When finding a place to rent, keep in mind what will make your life easier. Make a list of what is most important to you when renting a place. Be realistic and think about what you really need. During your search keep checking your list. Make sure you go see a rental place before you actually pay money for it because a listing can be misleading. When you go to see a place, remember your list and what is most important. Take a trusted person with you and compare your thoughts.

You may be thinking about renting a room in someone else's house. This can be a good way to keep the rental price low, but there are a few things to consider. When you rent a room in someone's home it might limit your rights to reasonable accommodations for your disability. It may also limit other rights you have as a tenant in other rental settings. It is especially important to make sure that everything is in writing and signed by you and the person who you are renting from.

What do I need to apply for a place to rent?

When you are applying to rent a place you want to make sure that you have the items you might need. Check what the specific place you want to rent requires. You may need proof of income, ID, an application fee, contact information for past landlords (if applicable) and past and current employers, references, transcripts (if you are a student), or even a credit report.

It is important to know what a landlord is allowed to ask on an application, as well as what they are not allowed to ask.



Some questions landlords can ask:

- What is your job, and how long have you had it?
- How much money do you earn?
- How many people will live in the rental?
- Do you have criminal convictions, and what convictions do you have?

A landlord cannot ask:

- What is your race, ethnicity, or natural origin?
- What is your religion or religious beliefs?
- What is your sexuality?
- What is your marital status?
- Do you have mental or physical disabilities?
- Do you take medication?
- Can I have your medical records?

How can I protect my rights when renting?

A lease is a signed document that spells out what your responsibilities are and what your landlord's responsibilities are. You want to make sure that everything a landlord has promised you is written in the lease.

At a minimum a lease should have:

- The amount of rent and when it is due
- Grace periods and penalties for late rent
- The length of the lease
- Who is responsible for utility payments
- Who is responsible for minor and major repairs
- When a landlord can enter a unit
- Information about any security deposit, when it will be returned, the circumstances under which it won't be returned
- Any other specific agreements you and the landlord made



If you violate the terms of a lease you can be evicted. Eviction means that you can be made to leave your apartment. Eviction can also be a big problem for your credit. It can make it hard to be able to rent another place, and it can make it hard to get loans or credit cards. If you get an eviction notice you have rights. Your local New Hampshire legal services may be able to help: www.nhla.org. Also, the Disability Rights Center-NH(DRC NH) may also be able to help: www.drcnh.org.

What are my general rights when renting a place?

A landlord must keep an apartment habitable. This means they cannot cause or allow situations that threaten the health and safety of renters. If you believe your landlord has violated this right of yours, you must inform them in writing and give them a chance to fix it. Landlords must respond within 24 hours. If there is an emergency, they must start fixing the problem within 24 hours. If it is not an emergency, then they must start fixing the problem within 96 hours.

If they do not, notify your landlord you are filing a complaint with the local health department, and file a complaint. You can find your local health department with this link: [NH Local Health Departments](#)

Generally, a landlord can only enter your apartment:

- If there is an emergency
- When you have moved out/abandoned the rental
- To do necessary or agreed upon repairs
- To show the apartment to prospective renters
- To allow entry to contractors
- To conduct an initial inspection before the end of tenancy
- By court order



What are the rights of people with disabilities when renting a place?

You have the right to request reasonable accommodations to be made. Reasonable accommodations are changes, adjustments, or exceptions to a rule, policy, or practice to allow a person with a disability to have equal opportunity to use and enjoy a place. An example is a landlord who has a no pet policy but allows a resident to have an emotional or service support animal for their disability.

You also have the right to request reasonable modifications to be made. A reasonable modification is a structural change made to existing premises, occupied or to be occupied by a person with a disability. These are done in order to afford that person full use of the premises. An example of a reasonable modification is changing the height of kitchen counters to allow a person in a wheelchair to easily access the counter to prepare meals.

When you are applying for a place, you do not need to let the prospective landlord know that you will need reasonable accommodations or modifications. Depending on your circumstances you may want to wait until after they have accepted your application to make that request. If they deny your application after they have already accepted, you can file a complain with:

- The Disability Rights Center-NH (DRC NH) at 1-800-228-0432
- The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Fair Housing Hub, Boston at 1-800-827-5005

With some exceptions, every landlord has to grant reasonable accommodations, and if the reasonable accommodation costs money, the landlord has to pay the cost. The most common exceptions are a four-unit apartment where the owner lives in one of the units or when a person rents a room out of their house.

Most landlords do not have to pay for reasonable modifications. A landlord may have to pay for reasonable modifications when they receive funding from the federal government, such as an apartment owned by a housing authority. An apartment that is not owned by the housing authority but takes Housing Choice Vouchers does not have to pay for reasonable modifications.

A landlord still has to allow a reasonable modification if the tenant is paying for it to be done in a professional manner. The tenant is also generally responsible for paying for the modification to be changed back when they are leaving.

There are sometimes grants or tax incentives available to landlords to pay for reasonable accommodations.



For a request to be considered a reasonable accommodation/modification it must:

- Be related to a person's disability
- Be a change, adjustment, or exception to a rule, policy, or practice
- Be practical and feasible
- Not be an undue burden (e.g. something very expensive or would take a lot of manpower)
- Not be a fundamental alteration (change the nature of what the landlord does)

Common examples of reasonable accommodations:

- Allowing a service, assistance, or emotional support animal despite a no pets policy
- Waiving a pet deposit for a service, assistant, or emotional support animal
- Creating an assigned parking spot close to their place for a person with a mobility disability
- Allowing alternative ways to pay rent to accommodate someone's disability

Common examples of reasonable modifications:

- Widening doorways
- Installing grab bars
- Lowering the kitchen sink
- Installing a ramp

When requesting an accommodation or modification, it is a good idea to make your request in writing and request the landlord put their response in writing. Also, make and keep copies of your requests and their responses. This way you have proof of your request and can make it less likely that there would be a miscommunication.

Your request should state that you have a disability and how the requested accommodation/modification helps with a symptom or issues caused by the disability. You can find a sample reasonable accommodation/modification request form on the next page. This form was developed based off of a similar form produced by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).



**Sample Letter Requesting a Reasonable
Accommodation/Modification from Your Housing Provider**

[Date]

Mr. / Ms. **[Name of Building Manager]**

[Housing Provider Name]

[Address]

Dear Mr. / Ms. **[Name of Building Manager]:**

I live at **[address]** in **[unit number]** and have lived there since **[date]**. I am a qualified individual with a disability, as defined by the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988.

Our building's rules state **[insert rule you wish to have an exception to]**. Because of my disability, I need the following accommodations: **[list accommodations and how they benefit symptoms/ issues caused by your disability]**. Please let me know what, if any, additional information you need in order to better understand my disability and the limitations it imposes.

Under the Fair Housing Amendments Act, it is unlawful discrimination to deny a person with a disability a reasonable accommodation of an existing building rule or policy if such accommodation may be necessary to afford such person full enjoyment of the premises.

If you have any questions about my request, you can contact me in writing or by phone. However, I ask that you respond in writing to this request within two weeks of the date of this letter. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

[Your full name]

[Your full address]

[Your contact information]



Remember, when you are requesting a reasonable modification, you are usually requesting that your landlord allow you to pay for and arrange to make the structural change, unless they are funded by the federal government. You may want to make clear in your request that you understand you will be paying for and arranging the work to make the change in order for the request process to go more smoothly.

If you make the reasonable accommodation/modification request and your landlord does not respond or has denied the request you can contact the Disability Rights Center—NH (DRC NH) to see if they can help you.

To schedule an intake appointment with the Disability Rights Center—NH (DRC NH), you can call (800) 834-1721 or request an intake online at drcnh.org/A2J.

Self-advocacy tips for requesting reasonable accommodations/modifications

- 1) Have a plan about whether you will ask for your accommodation/modification before or after signing the lease.
- 2) Keep everything in writing. Follow up on verbal conversations with written confirmation.
- 3) Be prepared with a doctor's letter stating you have a disability and how the accommodation/modification will help your disability (if not readily apparent).
- 4) Be prepared with a letter requesting accommodation/modification.
- 5) **Know your rights.**

If you need help or have questions about your rights as a tenant living with a disability in New Hampshire, you can contact any of the following organizations:

- Disability Rights Center—NH (DRC NH): (800) 834-1721
- NH Legal Assistance (NHCLA): (800) 921-1115
- 603 Legal Aid: (603) 224-3333



Checklist before renting a place

- ◇ Make a budget
- ◇ In that budget make sure you have money for furniture, dishes, bathroom items, etc. that you will need
- ◇ Make a list of what is important for the place you live
- ◇ Make a list of accommodations/modifications you may need
- ◇ Research how much apartments that meet your needs typically rent for
- ◇ Apply for assistance you might be entitled to
- ◇ Have a state ID
- ◇ Get reference letters
- ◇ Talk to people who might be willing to co-sign your lease



“Dedicated to the pursuit of dignity and justice, authentic community inclusion, cultural competency, and self-determination for all New Hampshire residents with developmental disabilities.”



Concord Office

2½ Beacon Street, Suite 10

Concord, NH 03301-4447

603-271-3236

TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964

info@nhcdd.us

www.nhcdd.nh.gov