



# Community Living Toolkit

**IRIS Consultant Agency**

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## Community Living Rachel's Story

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Rachael's family always knew that life outside their home would involve planning that was different than for their other children.

Rachael's family needed to find a group of people to help them and Rachael to navigate the tasks that lay ahead. This led to the creation of a "circle of friends" for their family.

The people in this circle were people who cared enough about Rachel and her family to contribute their heads, hands, and hearts towards putting a plan into action.

Rachael was interested in having a roommate while also living close to her family, friends, and work. She wanted access to transportation so she could get to the places she liked to be. The people around Rachel understood that her home life would need regular structure and support to ensure she was happy and safe in her life.

When we look at the things Rachel needed, we can see that they aren't much different than what we all want. By working together, her circle developed a plan for supports that would primarily keep Rachael in charge of what needed to happen in her life.



*Rachel and her "circle of friends"*

The circle identified a support agency they could trust. It was important to them that the agency first recognized Rachael as a person and then as someone with support needs. Next, the "circle" found a landlord with a duplex for rent located in a neighborhood near where Rachael currently lived.

It's been almost twenty years since Rachael moved out from her parents' home. While the years haven't all been worry-free, they **have** been years that Rachael is proud of and that include the people and things she cares most about.

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## Life at Home

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Everyone should live in a community-connected, safe home that they control. Life at home should be personalized, dictated by individual choices, and uphold a person's dignity.

When someone has a disability, the idea of community living in one's own home can sometimes seem overwhelming and scary. It doesn't have to be that way.

Many people with disabilities in Wisconsin have found ways to live self-directed, productive, and joyful lives in their own homes. There are many different names, labels and service codes for services related to housing and supports. This can complicate the process and take the focus off of the person who is doing the living.

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## How Can I Use This Workbook?

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This workbook will help you break down your goals related to living in the community. It will also give you methods to keep the focus on you, not the services.

You can use this workbook to guide you through the steps to find a better home. This home will be one you control and create using your gifts, and the gifts of the people around you.

Your home might be with your family in the city, an apartment with friends near a movie theater, or the home where you raised your children.

**It is important to remember two things:**

1. This process is about the person receiving supports. Not about an agency, an entity, a paperwork requirement, or a funding source.
2. You are not alone.

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## What is Community Living?

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Community living implies access, participation, and belonging in the natural community. Community building experts remind us that everyone has gifts to share and remind us that disability is natural.

***We all have gifts of the heart, head, hands, and human connections. There are things we can do or provide that contribute to the good of a common goal.***

Each of us encounters situations when we need help. No activity we undertake is completely independent.

Think about the last two things you did before you started reading this workbook. Were you completely independent? Or did someone else contribute to your experience? We all depend on each other.

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## Gifts in Action

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To determine the supports you need to be happy, safe, and healthy, you can start by making a list of your gifts (of head, hands and heart). Later, you will identify gifts of those around you to see whose gifts will compliment yours while you pursue your goals. Combining your gifts with those who care about you – along with the more traditional supports from the service system – will contribute to your best possible life.

**Example:** A young man with a developmental disability is at his own home on a wintery day. He shared his gift of heart and spent the day swapping stories with his neighbors, and later, they borrowed his snow blower. The neighbors shared their gift of hands by doing the young man's driveway after finishing their own.

This young man built relationships and strengthened his safety net by sharing his gifts. In the spring, on a weekend with no support staff available, these same neighbors answered when the young man called for help with his flooded basement.

**Example:** Joe has a job at a local technical college. He uses a wheelchair and needs help getting prepared before driving himself to work each day. Joe’s neighbor works at the office building next to the technical college and does not have a car.

Joe and his neighbor worked out an arrangement where the neighbor assists Joe in the morning and Joe gives the neighbor a ride to work every day. Joe and his neighbor share the gift of helping hands.

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## What do I need help with and where do I start?

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One hurdle to integrated community living is figuring out where to start.

Should you begin by finding a place? Finding a roommate? Finding the money? Finding help? Or start by finding someone to help figure it out and keep it going smoothly?

This workbook can help you determine what you want and need to live a happy, healthy, and safe life. You can identify what you need help to achieve using three simple questions:

1. What part of the task can I do completely alone?
2. What do I need just a little bit of outside help to do?
3. What do I need much more outside help to do?

**Example:** Jack wants to go to the movies on Thursday. He doesn’t drive and has challenges with reading the signs at the theater.

- Jack can choose which movie he wants with no assistance from the outside. *(Something he can do himself.)*
- Jack needs a ride. His neighbor works at the movie theater, so they ride the bus together. *(Jack uses a little bit of outside help.)*
- Jack gets help from the movie theater staff to find his seat before the movie starts. *(Jack uses much more outside help to do this.)*

Later, you will use this technique when creating the action plan toward community living.

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## What is Housing?

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Housing is a word used to refer to houses or apartments. This term is also attached to government programs that believe in helping everyone have access to a home. Housing programs do not typically specialize in supporting people with disabilities. However, as we focus more on making sure people with disabilities are living equally in communities; housing programs are beginning to understand the needs of people with disabilities and the elderly.

Shelter expenses can assume a large portion of individuals’ monthly budgets. Find out what you can afford by meeting with a mortgage broker, your local bank, or a housing organization listed in the reference section of this workbook.

The formal programs available for housing do not all exclusively serve people with disabilities. Housing services often focus on financial circumstances over medical or disability-related circumstances. Some housing communities developed based on tax credits may have certain restrictions related to who can hold a lease in those buildings. Other communities’ residency may be

based on monthly income. Some programs or agencies do work to bring about new housing developments that focus on integrated, accessible, subsidized housing.

You are encouraged to contact a housing authority or housing organization near you to determine if you qualify for any of the opportunities they might have to offer for housing. Most local authorities have newsletters that you are encouraged to sign up to receive. The more information you have about options in your community, the more advantage you will have in planning. A list of housing supports is provided for you at the end of this workbook.

House hunting is exciting! Don't miss out on the fun part of this journey. When you think about housing, think about the physical building, apartment, and neighborhood, as well as the inside décor and layout. Spend some time looking at what you like and be clear on what you don't. Visit open houses, model apartments, and neighborhoods at varying times of day to get sense of what it might be like to live there on a daily basis. Think about where your friends live, what places you like to visit, and make a list of what is most important to you about the location of your home.

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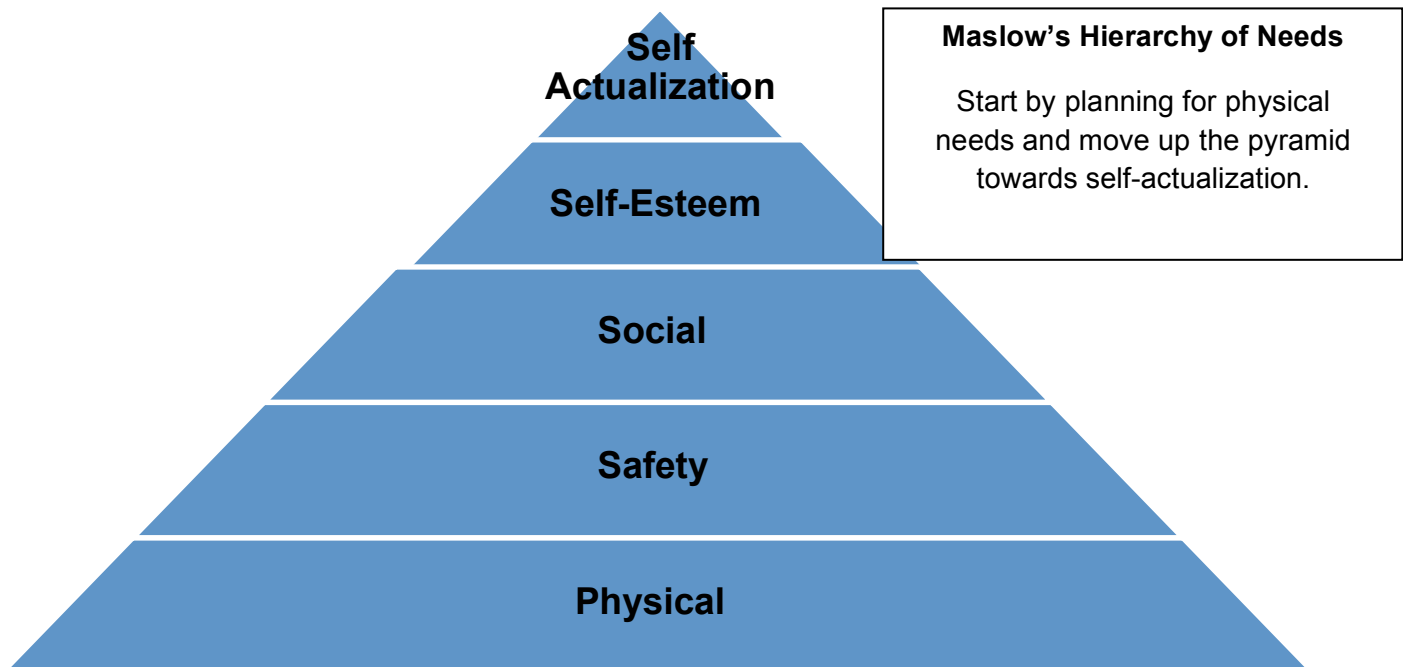
## Keeping the focus on you!

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Whether you choose to rent or own, you should remember the things that you enjoy about a home. What makes you feel rested and strong? What are the things you wouldn't want to live without?

These things are different for everyone and may not be related to a disability or medical need. For some people, it may be important to be close to a garden or a park. For others, it may be important to have quiet (or lots of noise!). Some people need to have a pet or stay near an old friend.

We all need different things in our life that help us to be happy, healthy, and safe. Abraham Maslow, a famous psychologist, created a hierarchy of needs that can be used when thinking about community living planning. He said that if our needs are met at each of the levels, we can achieve the best possible life.



What makes you happy? Maybe it means being with people you love and enjoy. It could be having the freedom to choose to go to a movie without any notice. It may be what you do for work, your hobbies, and other things that bring you joy.

When someone has support needs, it sometimes becomes less simple for them to access the things that make them happy. When planning your housing life, remember to make a list of what you need to have in your life to keep you happy. This list can change over time and it is important to be aware when a something new comes into your life.

The worksheets in this toolkit work by dividing your list-making into three areas:

1. What Are My “Must Haves”?
2. Where Do I Feel the Most Like Myself?
3. What Are My Physical, Emotional, and Social Needs?

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## What Are My “Must Haves”?

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What were the last three things you smiled at? What would you miss if tomorrow we told you there was no more \_\_\_\_\_? These are your “must haves”.

You can think of them in categories of what makes you safe, happy, and healthy. Someone might need a lifeline button to keep them safe in their home. Another person might need a regular trip to the coffee shop or their dog to make them happy. Someone else might need access to the local pool for swimming to keep them healthy.

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## Where Do I Feel the Most Like Myself?

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The place where you feel the most like yourself is made up of three different parts:

- The **people** around you
- The **location** of where you are
- The **look** of the space you are in

Think about the feel of sitting at a comfortable kitchen table. What is around you that brings you comfort? What is through the window when you look outside? Who is nearby? How many people are with you? Who are they? Do you share a room or have your own? How many bathrooms might you need? Will there be a garage?

It is important not to limit yourself when thinking about where you feel the most like yourself. Remember that we live in many different places throughout our lives. The more you know about what you want, the more you can plan for change.

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## What Are My Physical, Emotional, and Social Needs?

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**Physical needs** may be some of your longest lists. They should include the practical parts of your day. Think about what happens from the time you wake up until the time you return to bed in the evening. There were likely things you needed to address your physical needs. Did you need assistance from a person or technology to do things like; get dressed, take medicines, prepare a meal, or make sure your sidewalk is clear for the van driver? Remember to include staffing support needs, transportation provisions, doctor or therapy visits, etc. in these lists.

**Emotional needs** are sometimes more difficult to list. Think of them in categories of supports, community, and cultural acceptance. Take a moment and think about the last few times you were happy, felt accepted, or were frustrated. Make lists of the things that contributed to each of these feelings. Were you happy because you were at a church group or community event you enjoy? Were you angry because someone changed your schedule? Most people prefer a schedule they make themselves to meet their emotional needs.

**Social needs** are connections, accessibility, and places in your community. Your “social you” is made up of the connections you share with the people in your home, your neighborhood, and other parts of your day. Some people prefer lots of connections, others prefer only a few. Everyone wants access to the things they enjoy doing and the people they enjoy being with. Think about opportunities you have to access community or social clubs. You can also think about places and spaces in your community you like to go right now, or places you would like to go to in the future.

# WORKSHEET

## Identifying My Gifts

The practice of identifying gifts of the people in our lives can become a fun search-and-find activity. Start simple, but practice often. Complete a worksheet for yourself and ask people who support you to do the same.

### Gifts of the head: knowledge, information



### Gifts of the hand: practical skills



### Gifts of the heart: listening, caring, passionate beliefs



### Gifts of human connections: who you know, and the people they know





## WORKSHEET

### What Are My “Must Haves”?

Brainstorm answers to these questions – record your responses in the columns below.

What do I need to keep healthy?	What do I need to be safe?	What do I need to be happy?

Look at the lists you’ve created and divide the responses into one of the three categories below. Use your lists of gifts to help identify who you might be able to ask for help.

I can do that alone.	I can do that with some help.	I need more help to do this.

## WORKSHEET

### Where Do I Feel Most Like Myself?

Brainstorm answers to these questions – record your responses into the spaces below.

<b>The People</b> People who are important for me to be close to in my community.	<b>The Location</b> Places I need close by or access to in my community.	<b>The Look</b> What does my home look like? <i>House / apartment / other?</i> <i>Own / Rent? Urban / Rural?</i> <i>Attached / Detached?</i>

Look at the lists you've created and divide the responses into one of the three categories below. Use your lists of gifts to help identify who you might be able to ask for help.

<b>I can do that alone.</b>	<b>I can do that with some help.</b>	<b>I need more help to do this.</b>

# WORKSHEET

## What Are My Physical, Emotional, and Social Needs?

Brainstorm answers to these questions – record your responses into the spaces below.

<b>What Are My Physical Needs?</b> <i>Home care? Medical Supports? Adaptations? Climate?</i>	<b>What Are My Emotional Needs?</b> <i>Supports? Community? Cultural Acceptance?</i>	<b>What Are My Social Needs?</b> <i>Connections? Accessibility? Places? Groups? Clubs?</i>
<b>I can do that alone.</b>	<b>I can do that with some help.</b>	<b>I need more help to do this.</b>

# WORKSHEET

## Action Steps: Getting the Help You Need

Use this worksheet to compile the “Need More Help With” items from your “Must Haves”, Where I Feel Most Like Myself, and Physical, Social, Emotional Needs Worksheets.

1. First transfer the “Need More Help With” items.
2. For each item, enter the name of someone you know with a gift in that area.
3. For each name, enter a person who will help you ask for help.
4. Set a goal for when you will ask for help.
5. Return to the first column and mark **one** item from each group that is most important to you.

<b>Most Important</b>	<b>I Need More Help With My “Must Haves”</b>	<b>Who could help?</b>	<b>Who I will ask for help</b>	<b>When I will ask</b>
<b>Most Important</b>	<b>I Need More Help Where I Feel Most Like Myself</b>	<b>Who could help?</b>	<b>Who I will ask for help</b>	<b>When I will ask</b>
<b>Most Important</b>	<b>I Need More Help With My Physical Needs</b>	<b>Who could help?</b>	<b>Who I will ask for help</b>	<b>When I will ask</b>
<b>Most Important</b>	<b>I Need More Help With My Emotional Needs</b>	<b>Who could help?</b>	<b>Who I will ask for help</b>	<b>When I will ask</b>
<b>Most Important</b>	<b>I Need More Help With My Social Needs</b>	<b>Who could help?</b>	<b>Who I will ask for help</b>	<b>When I will ask</b>

# Bookmark This!

## **Housing Resources**

Wisconsin Fair Housing Council

<http://www.fairhousingwisconsin.com/>

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development <http://www.wheda.com/root/>

Wisconsin Association of Housing Authorities [http://www.wahaonline.org/Quick\\_Links.html](http://www.wahaonline.org/Quick_Links.html)

Wisconsin Apartment Association

<http://www.comportone.com/getparent.html?cpo/apts/assoc.htm,cpo/navi1.htm>

Wisconsin Independent Living Council

<http://www.il-wisconsin.net/council>

Fox Cities Housing Partnership

<http://www.housing-partnership.org/>

Neighborworks Green Bay

<http://www.nwgreenbay.org/>

Select Milwaukee

<http://www.selectmilwaukee.org/>

## **Home Ownership Resources**

Movin' Out

<http://www.movin-out.org/>

Wisconsin Front Door Housing

<http://www.wifrontdoorhousing.org>

Housing Counseling

[http://www.wheda.com/root/uploadedFiles/Website/Home\\_Buyers/Home\\_Buyer\\_Education/counselors.pdf](http://www.wheda.com/root/uploadedFiles/Website/Home_Buyers/Home_Buyer_Education/counselors.pdf)

## Wisconsin Housing Authorities

<b>Appleton</b>	<a href="http://www.appletonhousing.org/">http://www.appletonhousing.org/</a>
<b>Ashland</b>	<a href="http://www.ashlandcountyhousingauthority.org/">http://www.ashlandcountyhousingauthority.org/</a>
<b>Beloit</b>	<a href="http://www.beloit.govoffice3.com/index.asp?">http://www.beloit.govoffice3.com/index.asp?</a>
<b>Dane</b>	<a href="http://www.dcha.net/">http://www.dcha.net/</a>
<b>Dodge</b>	<a href="http://www.dodgehousing.org/">http://www.dodgehousing.org/</a>
<b>Eau Claire</b>	<a href="http://www.ci.eau-claire.wi.us/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.126">http://www.ci.eau-claire.wi.us/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.126</a>
<b>Fond du Lac</b>	<a href="http://www.fdlpha.org/">http://www.fdlpha.org/</a>
<b>Hartford</b>	<a href="http://ci.hartford.wi.us/Municipal_Depts/HCDA.htm">http://ci.hartford.wi.us/Municipal_Depts/HCDA.htm</a>
<b>Green Bay</b>	<a href="http://www.ics-gb.org/">http://www.ics-gb.org/</a>
<b>Kenosha</b>	<a href="http://www.kenosha.org/departments/housing">http://www.kenosha.org/departments/housing</a>
<b>La Crosse</b>	<a href="http://www.lacrossehousing.org/">http://www.lacrossehousing.org/</a>
<b>La Crosse County</b>	<a href="http://www.lcha.net/">http://www.lcha.net/</a>
<b>Madison</b>	<a href="http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/formshousing/index.htm">http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/formshousing/index.htm</a>
<b>Milwaukee</b>	<a href="http://www.hacm.org/">http://www.hacm.org/</a>
<b>Oshkosh Winnebago</b>	<a href="http://www.ohawcha.org/">http://www.ohawcha.org/</a>
<b>Outagamie</b>	<a href="http://www.outagamiehousing.us/">http://www.outagamiehousing.us/</a>
<b>Racine</b>	<a href="http://www.rcha.org/">http://www.rcha.org/</a>
<b>River Falls</b>	<a href="http://www.rfhousing.org/">http://www.rfhousing.org/</a>
<b>Sauk</b>	<a href="http://www.co.sauk.wi.us/dept/housing_authority/index.html">http://www.co.sauk.wi.us/dept/housing_authority/index.html</a>
<b>Stevens Point</b>	<a href="http://stevenspoint.com/housing/index.html">http://stevenspoint.com/housing/index.html</a>
<b>Superior</b>	<a href="http://www.superiorhousing.org/">http://www.superiorhousing.org/</a>
<b>Waukesha</b>	<a href="http://www.whaonline.com/">http://www.whaonline.com/</a>

## **Community Connecting Tools**

**Asset Based Community Development – Inclusion** – Mike Green uses his experiences as a community organizer and parent of a child with an intellectual disability to help other create community connections.

<http://mike-green.org/>

**Community Works** – David Wetherow uses his experience in planning and circle development to enhance individuals' access to strategies for developing supportive communities. In recent years, David has shared his Star Raft Community Connecting strategies in Wisconsin at many local events.

<http://www.communityworks.info/>

## **Self-Determination**

**InControl Wisconsin** – InControl Wisconsin is a resource, advocacy and education website that can provide you with information about self-determination.

<http://www.incontrolwisconsin.org/>

**Disability is Natural** – Kathie Snow's website connects you to great articles that help you understand and practice inclusion in your life.

<http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/>

**Community Inclusion.org** - The Institute for Community Inclusion is a national resource on cutting-edge practices and strategies.

<http://www.communityinclusion.org/>