

When Choosing a Home

Use this two-page worksheet when you visit a community care home, foster home, or home that provides special health care or habilitation services. It has some questions for you to ask and things to look for. You can fill in the worksheet after, or even during, your visit – or you can ask someone to help you fill it out. It will help you compare all of the homes you've visited so that you can make an *informed decision* - that means a choice you make based on what you have seen and heard. Because you may visit several homes, print out several copies of this worksheet so that you can use a different one for each home you visit.

First, talk to the service provider at the home. You might want to ask these questions:

About your service provider:

- Do you like your job?
- How long have you worked here?
- What do you like best about your job?
- How long have you worked with people with developmental disabilities?
- What kinds of jobs have you had?

About the home and its services and supports:

- What kinds of things do the people who live here do?
- What kinds of things do you teach people how to do?
- What do you do for fun?
- What kinds of things do you do on the weekends?
- What are the House Rules? May I have a copy? (*Afterwards ask yourself, "Are these rules I can live with?"*)
- How do you help consumers make decisions and choices?
- Who decides what the special activities will be?
- Who decides what the menus are going to be?
- Are the consumers who live here made to feel comfortable and accepted in the neighborhood?

Next, introduce yourself and talk to some consumers who live in the home. Ask the consumers about themselves:

- Do you like living here?
- How long have you lived here?
- What's your favorite thing about living here?
- What's your least favorite thing about living here?

Then, ask those consumers some questions about the home:

- What kinds of things do you do here?
- What have you learned to do here that you didn't know how to do before?
- What kinds of things do you do for fun here?
- How does your service provider help you to make decisions and choices?
- Who decides what social activities you do?
- Who decides what the menu is going to be?

Now, look around at the inside of the home, ask yourself these questions and check yes or no:

Do I like the way the house looks? Yes No

Is it clean? Yes No

Is the temperature comfortable? Yes No

Does the furniture look nice and comfortable? Yes No

Are there pictures on the wall? Yes No

Are there things like games, magazines, radios and TVs for entertainment? Yes No

Ask if you may look at consumers' bedrooms. When you do, ask yourself these questions and check yes or no.

Do the bedrooms look like they "belong" to the consumers who live in them? Are the bedrooms decorated by the people who live in them? Yes No

Do they have their own photos or pictures on the wall? Yes No

Do they have their own books, magazines, collections and hobbies? Yes No

Do some have their own TV's or stereos, etc.? Yes No

Would I like to have a bedroom like the bedrooms in the home? Yes No

Ask to see a menu. Ask yourself these questions and check yes or no:

Does it look like the food is good? Yes No

Are the meals well-balanced? Yes No

Do I think I would like the food here? Yes No

Can they provide the special diet and foods that I need? Yes No

Can I get the snacks and beverages of my choice? Yes No

Look at the outside of the home and at the neighborhood around it. Ask yourself these questions and check yes or no:

Is the home in a neighborhood with other houses? Yes No

Is the home near where I could work, go to school, or volunteer? Yes No

Is it near a shopping center or mall? Yes No

If I want to go to church or synagogue, are there places of worship nearby? Yes No

Is there a bus line nearby? Yes No

Do I feel safe in this neighborhood? Yes No

Could my family and friends get to this home easily to visit me? Yes No

Here's a space to write down other things you noticed and would like to remember about the home:

When you've visited all of the homes on your list, compare your worksheets. We hope this tool helps you in making a great choice!