



Places of Safety and Cohesion

Housing Needs of Hopis with Disabilities

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“Hopi communities were designed and constructed not simply as shelter from the elements, but rather as places of safety and social cohesion. The Hopi village was a place where individual families could live comfortably, practice their agrarian economy, attend to their religious obligations and build a society that took care of its community members and offered them a clear direction toward future security and prosperity.”

Former Hopi Chairman Wayne Taylor
Testimony on Housing and Community Opportunity to the Committee on
Financial Services
United States House of Representatives
May 3, 2004

Background and Summary of Findings

Twenty percent of the Hopis over the age of five have a disability.¹ While across the United States, less than one percent of homes lack complete plumbing or a complete kitchen, within the Hopi community 13% of homes lack complete plumbing and 11% of homes lack a complete kitchen.² The lack of these basic necessities can make it difficult to keep family members with disabilities home and can contribute to placing family members in institutions away from their homes and communities.

Across the Hopi Reservation, there is a severe shortage of adequate housing. High unemployment, low income, and an extreme lack of sufficient housing stock are all factors increasing the need for greater access to appropriate housing. However persons with disabilities face additional challenges, and therefore, have an even greater need for access to appropriate housing. Over the last seven years, the Native American Disability Law Center (the Law Center) has been working to identify the barriers to housing for families with disabilities. This report focuses on the results of those efforts, with people with disabilities identifying that the most significant barriers to housing are the lack of information and the complex and cumbersome housing application.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, *Characteristics of American Indians and Alaska Natives by Tribe and Language: 2000* - Table 8.

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, *Characteristics of American Indians and Alaska Natives by Tribe and Language: 2000* – Table 15.

Housing is a major concern to Hopis with disabilities.

In June, 2007, the Native American Disability Law Center (Law Center) conducted a comprehensive Needs Assessment in an effort to identify the most pressing needs of Native Americans with disabilities in the Four Corners region. This Needs Assessment consisted of sending out over 2,000 surveys to persons with disabilities, and conducting nine focus groups composed of individuals with disabilities, family members and service providers. A relatively high number of persons completing the survey identified themselves as Hopi and one of the focus groups was held in the Hopi community of Second Mesa, Arizona. The Needs Assessment identified housing as one of the major issues facing individuals with disabilities in our service area.

According to the 2007 Needs Assessment:

- Lack of access to adequate housing was the top issue raised by the focus groups;
- 35% of survey respondents did not have a place to spend the night in the previous year;
- 48% of survey respondents with a physical disability were homeless at one time or another; and
- 67% of the focus group participants reported facing continual discrimination and felt that they are not understood by their communities and tribal leaders.

The Law Center conducted a similar Needs Assessment in 2011 including surveys and focus groups. Very similar results were obtained, with housing being one of the top concerns for both survey and focus group participants.

- Over 90% of those responding to the surveys identified housing discrimination as a top concern.
- 65% of those participating in the focus groups identified housing as a major concern.

About the Law Center:

The Native American Disability Law Center is a non-profit organization that works to protect the legal rights of Native Americans with disabilities in the Four Corners area of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah. The Law Center also works to ensure that Native Americans with disabilities have access to justice and are treated equally in their communities and nations.

HOPI HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

Following up on the concerns raised in the 2007 and 2011 Needs Assessments, the Law Center developed and distributed a Housing Needs Survey in 2011-2012. Reported below are the results obtained solely by those who identified as Hopi.

Survey Participants

The survey participants were fairly evenly distributed between persons with a disability, parents or guardians of persons with a disability, other family members, and service providers.

The following responses relate to the person with the disability. Thirty-eight percent reported to be less than 18 years of age, 52% were between 18-64 years old, and 10% were 65 or older. About 55% live with family and 36% live in their own home. Regarding their primary disability, 45% reported a developmental disability, 10% reported mental illness, 20% were visual impaired, and 40% reported as other.

Survey Findings

Over 45% of the survey respondents reported being denied housing services. The income requirement was stated as the main reason for being denied housing services; several did not know why they were denied housing. About half of those that applied for housing from Hopi Tribal Housing Authority thought the application process was too complicated, too long or involved too

much paperwork. Of those that responded, half felt they were or may have been discriminated against.

Most striking are the responses to the questions regarding knowledge of the process and the right to obtain reasonable accommodation based on their disability. Over three-quarters (76.2%) did not know that at the time they applied for housing services, they had a right to request reasonable accommodations related to their disability. The same number did not know there was a grievance process if they were denied housing or had other problems. Of those currently in tribal housing, only three responded that accommodations are being provided related to their disability, one of which stated that it was provided by an outside organization, and one who stated that it was not satisfactory.

HOUSING FOCUS GROUP

Focus Group Participants

On February 28, 2012, a focus group was conducted in Second Mesa at the Hopi Cultural Center. Participants of this focus group were eight individuals from the Hopi community that included four persons with a disability, two family members, and two service providers. The purpose of this focus group was to seek input from Hopi community members of the status of accessibility of housing services for Hopis with a disability. The participants were asked to respond to 3 questions:

1. What are the major needs and issues of Hopis with a disability in accessing housing services?
2. Do disability service providers have the knowledge to assist a person with a disability to access housing services? and
3. Do family members or care takers have the knowledge to assist in seeking housing services?

Focus Group Findings

After an approximate two-hour discussion with all participants having the opportunity for expressing their comments and concerns, the following concerns were identified. It should be noted that the identified concerns may not be completely factual but are the opinions and concerns of the focus group participants and can be used for future clarification and education.

- There is significant lack of information and education from Hopi Tribal Housing Authority (HTHA) that results in service providers and community members not knowing how to access housing services for a person with a disability. No organization or individual has effectively addressed this major issue.
- Accessing housing services requires a person to visit a number of Hopi agencies and it is up to the individual to personally coordinate between such agencies.
- The process for home ownership is cumbersome and time consuming. First, a person must be approved for land from their specific village government; second, they must inform HTHA of this approval and then HTHA conducts the process to determine eligibility; third, if eligible then the person must seek funding through the Hopi Credit Union for approval of construction funds, and fourth upon approval of funding HTHA will notify Hopi Contractors for home construction.
- It seems that HTHA does not provide funding for HUD houses.
- There are 12 different village governments with some village governments not being part of the Hopi central government. Each village has a Chief and some Chiefs are reluctant to grant requested land for home construction, because they fear that if a person does not meet required payments then the home and related land will be taken over by HUD. In reality, such adverse situations will result in having home payment transferred to a family member or clan relative.
- Many families still live in small adobe homes that are overcrowded with extended relatives residing in a given home. The Hopi Tribe is growing

in population and housing will become a greater issue and need. Those living in the outlying areas of a village have to haul water for their personal use. The Environmental Health Department of IHS must provide approval for construction of water lines and plumbing systems and there is currently a ten-year waiting period. Frequently, when right of way issues for water and electric lines arise other community members may not want to grant such right of way to cross their property.

- In the Tuba City area, subdivisions have been constructed for HUD homes but such homes are poorly constructed and do not provide basic accommodations for individuals with disabilities. Requests for maintenance and repairs result in long waiting periods before being provided and HTHA does not provide disability related modifications. It has been noticed that on the Hopi Tribal Council meeting agenda, that there is some conversation about creating a subdivision for HUD homes on land west of the Hopi Cultural Center in Hopi.
- There are 40 public rental units in Winslow, Arizona about 60 miles from the Hopi reservation. If a person desires to seek such rental units they have to relocate to the Winslow community. It is thought that there are only two accessible units that accommodate individuals with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Simplify the Hopi Tribal Housing Authority Application Process**
- 2. Provide Community Education on the Application Process**
- 3. Inform Applicants that they can Request Accommodations**
- 4. Provide Applicants Information on the Grievance Process**