

# Housing Circumstances of Parents with Disabilities within the Child Welfare System

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## Introduction

This study uses data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Dataset (NCANDS) to examine the housing circumstances of parents with disabilities in the child welfare system, with particular attention to race/ethnicity and disability. The study found that parents with disabilities experienced higher likelihood of inadequate housing than parents without disabilities. The study also found that Black parents with disabilities experienced increased risk for inadequate housing compared to Black parents without a disability. Thus, efforts to address the need for housing for parents with disabilities must take an intersectional approach.



## Background

Parents with disabilities are disproportionately involved in the child welfare system (DeZelar & Lightfoot, 2018). Low-income families are also disproportionately involved in the child welfare system (Jonson-Reid et al., 2009). One key factor when considering poverty is the role of inadequate

housing, which can place some children at increased risk for abuse or neglect (Sinanan, 2011). This is especially critical given that we know that people with disabilities experience worse housing outcomes than their nondisabled peers (Schaak et al., 2017). However, there is little research on housing and parents with disabilities. Therefore, identifying the housing needs of parents with disabilities with child welfare involvement will provide important information about the needs and experiences of this population.

## Methods

This study used NCANDS data, which collects information about reports of child abuse and neglect from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Data includes information about the alleged types of maltreatment, determination of case findings (i.e., whether the alleged maltreatment was determined to have occurred), characteristics of children and caregivers, and services provided by the child welfare system.

## Findings

Among parents with child welfare involvement:

- Approximately 16% of parents with any type of disability experience inadequate housing, compared to about 4% of parents who have no disability.
- Parents with any disabilities are over three times more likely to experience inadequate housing.
- Black disabled parents experience nearly four times the risk of inadequate housing compared to Black parents without any disabilities.
- Housing risk varied between disabled parents based on race, with Black disabled



parents experiencing about 80% the risk of inadequate housing compared to white disabled parents.

## Conclusion

The findings suggest an urgent need to address inadequate housing for disabled parents. Given that the child welfare system strives to strengthen families and enhance their ability to meet children's needs, addressing housing disparities for disabled parents within the child welfare system should be prioritized. Policies and programs that provide housing supports should also address the lived experiences of disabled parents of color, who confront multiple forms of oppression.

## References

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## Credit

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