

Rich Piche, Coordinator, Family Type Homes for Adults
New York State Office of Children and Family Services
Rensselaer, NY

FAMILY TYPE HOMES FOR ADULTS

Description:

Family Type Homes are one of the most prolific, but largely unrecognized, housing options available for adults aged 18 and over who have difficulty living alone because of physical or mental frailties. Tens of thousands exist in at least half the states across the country. They are known by a variety of names, are certified and regulated by varying government agencies, and operate under varying licensure and operating requirements. Despite this variety, a common philosophy characterizes all these homes—a family-home environment for a small number of individuals (one to six clients), personalized supportive assistance, a flexible daily routine, and maximized autonomy and privacy—as an alternative to an institutionalized environment. National surveys of this housing option indicate that Family Type Homes serve a heterogeneous population—all elderly residents; all younger-aged individuals with physical impairments, developmental disabilities, or mental health issues; or a combination of both older and younger residents. In New York State, the State's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) currently (2009) certifies over 500 Family Type Homes for Adults, with a capacity for 1,500 residents.

In New York, a Family Type Home for Adults is defined in law (NYCRR, Title 18, Chapter II, Subchapter D, Part 489) as a type of adult residential care facility, certified by OCFS, and offering an important way to provide care for disabled or dependent adults who are unable to live on their own. Operators can care for one to four adults; an operator caring for five or more adults must be licensed as an Adult Home. The Family Type Home can be an operator's private house, part of a two-family house, or part of an apartment building. Operators are people who enjoy sharing their home and abilities with adults who can no longer live safely alone, due to physical or other limitations associated with age, physical or mental disabilities, or other factors.

New York's Family Type Homes provide long-term residential care, including room, board, housekeeping, personal care, and/or supervision to four or fewer adults who are unrelated to the operator. What makes this living environment a "home," with a family atmosphere, rather than an "institution" is the limited number of residents and the fact that the operator, who holds the certificate, lives with the residents and provides 24-hour-a-day supervision/services. This housing alternative helps residents age in place as long as possible, serving to protect New York's most vulnerable adults in a comfortable, supportive, safe environment with the added benefits of companionship and the friendship of others. Residents do not need the skilled medical or nursing services provided in nursing homes. In addition, residents are not confined to the Home; many attend sheltered workshops, senior citizen centers, and other activities.

New York's Family Type Home operators are mandated by regulation to maintain a clean and safe environment, prepare nutritious meals, and assist with personal care/supervision, medication management, and medical appointments. Residential services and supportive care are bundled into a monthly charge, and payment can be arranged on either a private-pay basis or, for those residents in receipt of SSI/Safety Net benefits, the Social Services Law and State regulations established a congregate care rate (Supplemental Security Income (SSI)—New York State Supplement Level 1) for the room, board, and services provided by the operator. The resident receives a portion of the rate as a Personal Needs Allowance, and the balance is paid to the operator. All services and fees must be clearly set out in a written admission agreement, which is signed by the operator and the resident and which must be provided to a prospective resident prior to the date of admission. The admission agreement describes the services to be provided; the resident's rights and responsibilities; all financial arrangements, including the Personal Needs Allowance, refunds, and security deposits, if any; and discharge or transfer procedures.

OCFS' main goal is to provide a safe, healthy, and secure environment for the residents; and the Office administers a system of supervision, inspection, technical assistance, and enforcement for Family Type Homes to assure compliance with regulations and to maintain standards of care. Applications to operate a Home must be made on OCFS forms, along with supportive information, and filed with the Local Department of Social Services, which is responsible for verifying the information in the application, providing OCFS with a recommendation of approval or denial, conducting unannounced inspections at least once a year, and supervising the Home under the direction of OCFS.

Most Family Type Homes are the operator's single family home in a residential neighborhood. In regard to zoning, New York courts have defined "family" to extend beyond the nuclear family and to include small groups of individuals living together as a family unit. Accordingly, municipalities cannot restrict the establishment of a Family Type Home for Adults in areas that are zoned for single family dwellings. In addition, where certain zoning restrictions have been put into place, these have been found to violate the Federal Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Benefits:

- This housing and services alternative is easily established in urban, suburban, and rural areas.
- For rural areas, where limited populations do not provide the market size necessary for conventional multiunit housing options to be financially feasible, the limited-resident size of Family Type Homes makes them an ideal long-term care model for less populated areas.
- Family Type Homes provide an age-integrated living environment, which studies have shown is preferred by most older people. The operators, who live with the residents as a family unit, are typically not elderly; in many instances, the

young children of the operator are also living at home. For many homes, residents also comprise a variety of ages.

- The homelike atmosphere and familial surroundings, together with safety and supportive supervision, appeal to older people who do not like the impersonal environment of a large multiunit development.
- The majority of individuals with developmental disabilities never enters the formal services system, but remain living at home with their parents as primary caregivers. Increasingly, developmentally disabled individuals are living into old age; and their very elderly parents are dying or becoming too frail to care for them. For people with developmental disabilities, Family Type Homes provide an option that closely replicates their previous living-at-home arrangement, allowing them to age in place in a setting that is environmentally familiar and manageable. The personalized level of care and the intimate family environment provides a level of comfort for the aging parents as they reach the end of their caregiving abilities or the end of their lives.
- For family caregivers who cannot bring their elderly or younger disabled relatives into their own homes to live, but who do not want to move these relatives into an institutional, impersonal, or unsupervised environment, Family Type Homes offer an alternative family environment that is safe, supportive, and intimate.
- For operators, this option provides both a source of income and a meaningful role.
- For a community seeking to expand the availability of housing options, establishment of a Family Type Home can be more easily accepted by neighboring residents, as it is most often established in the provider's private home and, thus, is less obtrusive than multiunit housing and is completely integrated into the surrounding neighborhood.
- Since the operator and residents are defined as a family unit, the Home is considered a single family residence and does not require special zoning accommodations.

Impediments or barriers to development or implementation:

- The 2009 SSI Congregate Level I reimbursement rate for operators caring for SSI recipients is \$902 upstate and \$940 downstate. This *monthly* reimbursement (covering the costs of room, board, services, and care provided) is minimal. An additional *annual* allotment of \$865 from a Special Needs Fund is available for clothing, transportation, recreational activities, substitute care in the event of an operator's emergency absence, and health and safety equipment.
- Each local Department of Social Services has only one staff person for the Family Type Homes Program, who is responsible for all recruitment, training,

and home inspections for quality of care and conditions of the physical environment.

- Across the country, the variety of names for this housing alternative, the lack of publicity about them, and their primary establishment in the private homes of the operators combine to make them an "invisible option." Most housing advocates, community leaders, and consumers are unaware of them and, thus, do not include them when considering the housing needs of the community's aging or impaired adults.
- The large number of these small homes makes it difficult to monitor the quality of the environment or the quality of the care.
- There is an inconsistent level of professionalism among the providers and there are varying staff-to-resident ratios among homes.
- Like any large network of a specific housing option, living environment quality varies widely, as does the qualifications and abilities of the operators.

Resource—laws and regulations:

- To view the regulations governing certification and operation of Family Type Homes on line, follow these steps:
 - New York State Department of State, Division of Administrative Rules: <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/info/register.htm>;
 - On the left menu, choose: Online New York Codes, Rules and Regulations (NYCRR);
 - At the top of the page, click on: [VIEW THE UNOFFICIAL NYCRR ONLINE HERE](#);
 - In the list of titles, choose: Title 18 Department of Social Services;
 - If a pop-up blocker notice is given, click on: [Continue to WebLinks](#);
 - In the list of titles, click on the icon in front of: Title 18 Department of Social Services;
 - In the drop-down menu, choose: Chapter II Regulations of the Department of Social Services;
 - Under Chapter II, select: Subchapter D Adult Care Facilities;
 - Under Subchapter D Adult Care Facilities, select: Part 489 Adult Care Facilities Standards for Family Type Homes.

Resource—example:

- Orange County, New York—Department of Social Services, Family Type Homes for Adults Program: 39 certified homes with a capacity for 123 residents; contact the Program Coordinator at (845) 291-4554.

Resource—written and web:

- Vera Prosper (2005), "Adult Foster Care and Adult Family Care," *Oxford Handbook of Social Work in Health and Aging*. Editor: Barbara Berkman. New York: Oxford University Press.

- A list of Family Type Homes in New York State is available from The Bureau of Adult Services, New York State Office of Children and Family Services, 518-473-6446.

Resource—technical assistance contact name:

- For information and application forms for establishing a Family Type Home for Adults:
 - Bureau of Adult Services, New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), (518) 473-6446;
 - New York City: Division of Voluntary and Proprietary Homes for Adults, Human Resources Administration, (212) 971-2930;
 - Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Web site:
<http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us> (click on ADULTS: PSA; then, PSA Forms and Brochures);
 - Contact the local Department of Social Services in the county in which the Family Type Home is to be established and ask for the Coordinator of the Family Type Home for Adults Program.