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PMS SENATOR VIC FISCHER (ONLY BEFORE 1130AM)

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URGE SUPPORT OF BILLS RELATED TO HOUSING FOR THE HANDICAPPED.  
DESPERATE NEED FOR LOCAL RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES FOR YOUNG  
MENTALLY RETARDED ADULTS WHOSE HOME COMMUNITY IS WITHIN THE ANCHORAGE  
AREA. ONLY VIABLE ALTERNATIVE FOR MANY IS INSTITUTION IN VALDEZ  
AND HOPE COTTAGES EITHER OF WHICH ARE APPROPRIATE. REQUEST  
TELECONFERENCE FOR ADDITIONAL ANCHORAGE INPUT  
HELEN MOTHERSHEAD, PLANNING CHAIRMAN  
ASSOCIATION FOR RETARDED CITIZENS OF ANCHORAGE  
827 NORMAN STREET  
ANCHORAGE ALASKA 99504



# DIVISION of VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

A SURVEY  
OF  
THE HOUSING NEEDS  
OF  
ALASKA'S ORTHOPEDICALLY HANDICAPPED

Prepared December 20, 1980  
by John F. Schlicting  
Chief of Planning and Research

A SURVEY  
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for  
The Orthopedically Handicapped Action Group  
2220 Nichols Avenue  
Anchorage, Alaska 99504

The level of services available to Alaska's disabled population has always lagged behind that available to disabled persons residing in most other states. This gap has been especially apparent in the area of housing for the disabled. However, the fact that a need exists does not by itself identify how that need can best be satisfied. In order to attack the problem effectively, planners must be able to answer a multiplicity of questions. Some areas of concern include the transportation needs of disabled persons in Alaska, the degree to which architectural barriers constitute a problem, and how much disabled persons can afford to pay for housing. In order to obtain answers to these and other questions, the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), at the request of the Anchorage based Orthopedically Handicapped Action Group (OHAG) surveyed orthopedically handicapped present and former DVR clients. This survey was conducted by mail during the summer of 1980. It asked questions concerning handicapped individual's preferences with respect to housing, information concerning the source and level of their income, and finally, their opinion as to what their needs were and what they felt was needed in the way of housing for the severely disabled.

#### Study Approach

Data was collected via a mail survey of 400 clients and former clients of the agency, who were served during the period from October 1, 1979 to May of 1980. Clients to be surveyed were selected on the basis of being both orthopedically handicapped and severely disabled. The

survey itself consisted of one mailing of questionnaires. Owing to time constraints surrounding completion of the survey a second mailing was not attempted. However, a total of 157 out of the 400 questionnaires were returned. This represents a response rate of almost 40%, which is nearly double the 19 to 25% rates typically observed with mail surveys. Indeed, in view of the high response rate on the first mailing, it is arguable that a second mailing would not have generated significant additional responses. This line of reasoning would postulate that the vast majority of the surveyed individuals who were likely to respond in fact did so on the first mailing since the response rate in question, in fact, approximated what one would normally expect after several mailings.

Processing of survey responses was accomplished using the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's GNAT micro computer system. Data from the survey forms was coded and transferred onto summary sheets. It was then entered into the computer where it was stored on a floppy disk. This allowed investigators great flexibility in terms of retrieving and manipulating data. It also preserved survey data in a readily retrievable, relatively permanent form so that it can be easily used by future researchers. Statistical calculations such as mean and standard deviation as well as various statistical tests were accomplished using both the GNAT and an Alpha 325 Scientist desk top programmable calculator. Which machine was used was determined largely by the availability of software for a specific application.

## Results

Data given below is for Alaska, statewide. Anchorage and statewide less Anchorage. The possibility of breaking out data for Fairbanks was considered as well. However, with a total of only 23 respondents from that community it was not felt that meaningful conclusions could be drawn concerning housing needs of Fairbanks' total orthopedically handicapped population. The results are presented as percentages of total responses on an item. This is because there is no reliable information currently available concerning the total disabled population statewide or sub-populations thereof residing in the various communities around the state. As a result it was impossible for us to develop gross estimates for any of the items covered in the survey. Assuming the sample reflected by our respondents is in fact representative of the orthopedically handicapped population in terms of their response to our survey, the percentages given here should reflect the proportion of the total orthopedically handicapped population in terms of the item in question.

In any case, survey data is presented below in the order that it appeared on the questionnaire and is followed by a brief discussion. The first question dealt with income.

### Respondent's Income Status

<u>Percentages</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Rest of State</u>
Receiving	83%	87%	78%
Not Receiving	17	13	22

Percent of Respondents Having Income  
Receiving Various Types \*

<u>Type</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Rest of State</u>
Wages	29.2%	30.4%	27.9%
Aid to Disabled	18.5	21.7	14.8
Social Security	37.6	36.7	38.6
AFDC	5.4	7.2	3.3
Food Stamps	15.4	17.4	13.1
Other	24.2	26.6	21.8

\* Percentages given above will add to more than 100% because some respondents received more than one type of income.

Monthly Income  
For Persons Reporting Income \*

<u>Income Amounts</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Rest of State</u>
Maximum	\$3200	\$2500	\$3200
Minimum	25	25	200
Average	796	736	868

\* The income amount question was optional. Ninety-one persons responded statewide, fifty-one of whom resided in Anchorage.

Of the group of individuals who responded to our survey, 83% statewide indicated that they were in fact receiving income. This percentage was slightly higher for Anchorage (87%) and slightly lower for the balance of the state (78%).

However, while a majority of the persons surveyed reported receiving income, only a relatively small number of those reported wages as being included in their income. Of those clients reporting income statewide, only 29% indicated they were receiving wages. When the number of persons receiving some form of wage and salary income is applied to total respondents, one finds that roughly 24% were in fact

engaged in paid employment. Or, conversely, approximately 76% of total respondents were unemployed when surveyed.

For those clients receiving non-wage income, the majority indicated that this came in the form of transfer payments from Social Security, Aid to the Disabled or Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Indeed Social Security payments were the most common form of income cited with 38% of respondents having income, reporting Social Security payments as comprising some or all of it.

In terms of average income amount, persons who responded to that question on the survey listed monthly incomes which, for the most part lagged significantly below the average for Alaska's working population. Statewide, respondents indicated an average income of less than \$800 per month. Comparatively, the estimated average monthly wage for Alaskan non-agricultural wage and salary workers during 1979 was \$1741, according to statistics compiled by the Alaska Department of Labor. <sup>1</sup>

Of those respondents who indicated that they were working, roughly 60% were engaged in competitive employment. Another 20% were employed in a sheltered work setting, while the balance were engaged in another form of employment. (i.e., self employed, unpaid family worker, etc.)

Public transportation in most Alaskan communities is spotty at best, even for the non-disabled. For the orthopedically handicapped, the situation is much worse, as can be seen from the table below.

Percent of Respondents Utilizing  
Various Types of Transportation

<u>Mode of Transportation</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Rest of State</u>
Private Car	59.1%	57.1%	61.1%
Public Transportation	15.5	21.4	9.3
Car Pool	4.5	3.6	5.6
Parents	2.7	1.8	3.7
Special Transportation	6.4	10.7	1.9
Other	11.8	5.4	18.5

As is readily apparent, the private automobile is the primary means by which most survey respondents travel to and from school or work. Only in Anchorage did a significant proportion of respondents indicate public transportation as their primary means of transportation. Anchorage was also the only area in which respondents indicated making any use of special transportation aimed specifically at the handicapped. Presumably this reflects the almost total lack of such specialized transportation elsewhere in the state. Further suggesting that transportation is a significant problem for orthopedically handicapped, are written comments from survey respondents. These cite the hardship involved having to depend upon family and friends for such crucial activities as shopping and going to the doctor. Indeed, it appeared that many respondents were literally housebound by the inadequacy or non-existence of public transportation service to the areas in which they reside.

Attendent Care Needs

When respondents were queried concerning their needs for assistance in various activities of daily living, just over 40%, statewide, indicated needing assistance for one or more of the listed activities.

Roughly the same proportion was noted for survey respondents residing in Anchorage.

The table below gives the proportion of respondents indicating a need for assistance in accomplishing specific activities.

Proportion of Respondents  
Requiring Assistance for Various  
Activities of Daily Living \*

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Balance of State</u>
Bathing	14.6%	13.9%	15.4%
Dressing	12.9	11.4	14.1
Toileting	8.9	8.9	9.0
Transfer	12.1	11.4	12.8
Eating	6.4	6.3	6.4
Cooking	22.9	22.8	23.1
House Cleaning	30.6	32.9	28.2
Laundry	23.6	26.6	20.5

\* Percentages will add to more than 100%, since many respondents required help for more than one activity.

As is apparent from an examination of the above table, there is little if any difference between Anchorage and the rest of the state in terms of the proportion of disabled respondents requiring various types of assistance. In order to get an idea of the proportion of total respondents whose disabling condition substantially limits their ability to function, we obtained a count of those persons who required assistance with one or more of the first 5 activities (i.e., bathing, dressing, toileting, transfer and eating). The rationale behind this is based on the assumption that these are activities that even a moderately impaired person can generally perform unaided.

Using the above methodology, we found that approximately 44% of respondents both statewide and in Anchorage require fairly substantial assistance from another person (i.e., an attendant) in order to function on a day to day basis.

### On-going Health Care Needs

As can be seen from the table below, the most common form of on-going medical care required by survey respondents was physical therapy.

On-Going Health Care Needs of Respondents			
<u>Type of Care</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Balance of St.</u>
Physical Therapy	33.8%	36.7%	30.8%
Occupational Therapy	8.9	10.1	7.7
Speech Therapy	1.9	1.3	1.3
Aide Care	1.9	2.5	1.3
Skilled Nursing Care	5.1	5.1	2.6
Other	10.8	6.3	15.4

This was true both in Anchorage and statewide. When a count was obtained of total persons requiring medical assistance (i.e., any one of the categories listed) on an ongoing basis, it was found that 45.2% of respondents statewide and 44.3% in Anchorage required some form of periodic medical care.

### Current and Preferred Living Situation

When respondents were queried as to their current living arrangements, the vast majority (64% statewide) were found to be living in their own house or apartment.

<u>Current Living Situation</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Rest of State</u>
Own house or apartment	66.0%	69.7%	62.3%
Nursing home	3.3	5.3	1.3
Parents	13.1	14.5	11.7
Other	17.6	10.5	24.7

Only a very small proportion were residing in nursing homes. Presumably, this at least partially reflects the fact that persons institutionalized on a long term basis are not usually eligible for VR services, and therefore would not have been surveyed in this study.

With respect to preferred living arrangements, as the table below indicates, the majority of respondents (55% in Anchorage and 62% statewide) would prefer to live independently as opposed to with a roommate or with parents.

Preferred Living Situation

<u>Living Situation</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Rest of State</u>
Independent	59%	55%	63%
With Attendant	16	16	15
With Roommate	8	9	7
With Parents	3	3	3
Nursing Home	0	0	0
Other	15	17	13

Many who indicated this preference stressed that to them "independent" meant with spouse and family. Interestingly, only 3% indicated that living with parents was their preferred living situation. In view of the fact that some 13% of respondents are currently residing with their parents, this appears to indicate that the vast majority of

persons in this living situation would, in fact, move out were suitable quarters available. No one who responded to the survey indicated nursing home as a preferred life style.

Barrier Free  
Housing Preference

<u>Preference</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Rest of State</u>
Eight-plex-Handicapped Tenents Only	17%	22%	13%
Within a Regular Apartment Building	48	46	49
House	20	25	15
Other	15	7	23

In terms of barrier free living situations, the largest proportion of respondents indicated a preference for living in an apartment within a regular apartment building which had been modified to accomodate their functional limitations. Some 20% indicated a preference for living in a house or single dwelling units. Presumably these are homeowners (or spouses thereof) who could benefit from having their abode modified to make it easier for them to function there. In fact, several respondents commented on the need for a program to finacially help disabled homeowners modify their dwellings and make them more habitable. Finally, some 17% of total respondents indicate a preference for an eight-plex tailored specifically for the disabled.

Preferences  
With Respect to  
Furnishings

<u>Type of Furnishings Preferred</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Rest of State</u>
Furnished Apartment	58%	50%	66%
Unfurnished Apartment	17	29	6
Partially Furnished Apartment	25	21	28

As can be seen from the above table, the great bulk of respondents indicate a need for at least some furniture, with over half indicating a preference for a totally furnished apartment.

When respondents were queried as to their preference with respect to the location of kitchen and dining facilities, 71% indicated a preference for kitchen facilities in the apartment. Only 4% indicated a preference for a centralized dining hall. However, some 25% indicated a preference for both a dining hall and kitchen facilities in their apartment.

Preference With Respect  
to Location of Kitchen and Facilities

<u>Preference</u>	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Rest of State</u>
Apartment	71%	70%	72%
Dining Hall	4	7	2
Both of Above	25	23	27

Degree of Immediate Need for Adequate Housing

Respondents were not queried specifically as to whether or how soon they would be willing to move into barrier free housing once such housing became available. However, by analyzing respondent comments,

it appeared that some 24% of respondents statewide (29% in Anchorage) were in immediate need of satisfactory housing. Included in this group were individuals who complained of the great financial burden posed by rental payments or who were in an obviously unfavorable living situation (i.e., institutionalized, living with parents or with friends). Another 32% statewide (and 35% in Anchorage) appeared to be uninterested in moving into barrier-free housing. These were primarily persons who owned their own homes or who indicated only minimal mobility problems. With respect to the homeowners, it should be noted that while they were not interested in moving per se, many expressed an interest in financial assistance to make their dwellings more accessible.

For lack of a better term, the remainder of the respondents were classed as persons who might move into more appropriate housing, assuming such housing was available. These were persons who, neither own their current residence nor expressed a positive interest in staying where they were, and did have some concerns with respect for housing for the disabled. However, based on their comments or lack thereof, they were not considered to be in as dire straits with respect to their living situations as the group we felt would be willing to move on a short term basis should adequate housing become available. The table below breaks out the results of our analysis.

Willingness to Move  
to Obtain Better Housing

	<u>Statewide</u>	<u>Anchorage</u>	<u>Rest of State</u>
Would Move Immediately	24%	29%	19%
Might Move	44	36	53
Not Interested in Moving	32	35	28

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

There are a number of conclusions that can be inferred from the survey data. The first of these is that in order for the orthopedically handicapped to take advantage of any housing program targeted towards them, such a program will have to incorporate some form of housing subsidy. To see that this is so, consider that, as noted previously, the average monthly income of survey respondents statewide at \$796, is less than half the \$1741 reported by the Alaska Department of Labor for non-agricultural workers in Alaska during 1979. Although no data was collected on rents, it seems safe to assume that the ability of severely orthopedically disabled (and indeed other severely disabled) Alaskans to pay for shelter bears similar relationship to its actual cost, to that which is characterized by the disparity between their income and that of non-disabled employees Alaskans. This tends to be substantiated by respondents comments, many of which cite the cost of rent and utility bills as posing a significant hardship to them. Indeed, one single mother of two indicated that of her roughly \$600 monthly income, \$400 went for rent and utilities, with the balance going for food stamps in order to allow her and her children to eat.

Little if any was left over for the extras which most of us take for granted. As a result, failure of policy makers to incorporate a subsidy mechanism into any housing program for the orthopedically handicapped could result in establishment of barrier free dwellings which though tailored to the needs of this group would be unaffordable to them. Such a conclusion may appear obvious and indeed, it probably is. It is stated here primarily because the history of public housing programs in the United States is dotted with numerous blunders with respect to their ability to actually address the needs of the the population at which they are targeted.<sup>2</sup>

A second conclusion that seems to fall out of the study is that housing for the disabled should be geographically compatible with the services they require, and with their activities of daily living. On one hand this means that medical facilities, stores and recreational facilities need be located close by. Although the survey did not solicit respondents perceptions as to the difficulty of getting around, the relatively low response to questionnaire items dealing with transportation suggests that this is a significant problem for many orthopedically handicapped.

On the other hand, it suggests that housing for the disabled should be located in a manner such that it can be effectively served by para professionals providing those services which the disabled typically receive in the home (i.e., attendant care and homemaking services). This is especially relevant when one considers the shortage of persons trained in many of these areas. While increased emphasis in areas

such as independent living rehabilitation should encourage the training of more persons with these skills, elimination of shortages in this area will not happen overnight. In the meantime, there is the need to insure that efficiency of provision of these services is maximized.

Thirdly, survey results indicate that the majority of respondents want housing which gives them the opportunity to live as independently as possible, and in general exist on an equal footing with non-disabled persons. The best indication of this is the fact that almost 60% of all respondents indicated a preference for living either alone, or with their nuclear family. Another indicator of this is the fact that while 14% of total respondents reported that they were currently living with their parents, only 3% stated this as a preferred living situation.

With respect to equity concerns, most respondents indicated a preference for living within a regular apartment building or in a single family dwelling. Although 17% of respondents did indicate a preference for eight-plex housing tailored for the handicapped, there did not appear to be any great sentiment for a living situation which would tend to segregate the disabled within the community. Indeed, respondent comments repeatedly articulate the concern that housing for the disabled be co-located with similar housing for the non-handicapped. This seems to represent another manifestation of what the advocacy movement has been telling us all along. That is that the disabled want the opportunity to live, work and play on an equal

footing with the non-disabled. They don't want to be set apart or type cast simply on the basis of having a physical or mental handicap. In view of this fact, it would be well to do a good deal of preliminary investigation prior to establishing a block of housing catering to the disabled alone. Possibly those that would favor such housing are persons whose functioning level is such that co-locating them with other persons having similar impairments might greatly enhance the efficiency of providing support services such as attendant care and homemaking assistance. Such housing would fall somewhere in between the traditional institutional model (i.e., nursing homes) and a totally independent living situation. Given that the vast bulk of survey respondents appear to want to get as far towards the latter (and far away from the former) as possible, caution is advised in consideration of any housing program that would result in segregating the disabled from the rest of the community, or labeling them as different.

#### Concluding Remarks

A reading of the recommendations contained in this study tends to suggest that we are assigning to policymakers in the area of housing for the disabled an impossible charge. How, one might ask, given that resources are scarce, can planners hope to come up with a housing program which is economically affordable, close to services, employment and recreational opportunities, and which allows the disabled person to maximize his independence in activities of daily living. The answer is that they probably can't. Indeed, virtually all public policies represent compromises which seek to maximize the positive effects of a program given the constraints posed by the

environment in which the program must operate. Hopefully, by listing as many of the conditions as possible which would characterize an effective housing program for the orthopedically disabled, we can provide a basis establishment of a program whose effectiveness will be maximized, subject to the constraints posed by the available resources and the environment in which the program must operate.

## Footnotes

1> Alaska Department of Labor Statistical Quarterly First Quarter 1980, pp1.

2> For a lucid description of the public housing boondoggle in United States see Jones, Charles O., An Introduction to the Study of Public Policy - second edition, copyright 1977, by Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., Belmont, California 94002, pp 193-199.