



**“Hardships  
often  
prepare  
ordinary  
people  
for an  
extraordinary  
destiny.”**

— C.S. Lewis

*This year we will be highlighting some special people and organizations who are making a difference in the lives of the disabled and their supportive families. We hope you make use of these connections as it is our hope that they will link our Special Needs Community in a more personal and supportive way.*

## statistics can be overwhelming

Studies show that 3.5 million adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities currently live with a family caregiver, and a third of them live with caregivers over the age of 60. No one can deny just how significant the need is for appropriate housing and that it is extremely difficult to find existing options. In most states there is no specific directory, and support workers often lack the knowledge of appropriate options.

**What are families going to do?**

A few years ago, the Madison House Autism Foundation launched the **AUTISM HOUSING NETWORK**, a website which publishes housing options and resources for autistic adults and those with intellectual or developmental disabilities. We believe this is the most up-to-date, extensive resource available with search options in various categories such as property types, support models, payment options, and support levels — just to name a few.

The Autism Housing Network doesn't stop there, it also provides educational articles, statistics, and resources such as **Public Funding 101**, a **Turning 18 Checklist**, and a virtual tour of housing options — which is just a small part of the substantial content you will find on their website. Madison House Autism Foundation's Housing Director, **Desiree Kameka** is passionate about innovative communities for individuals with autism and other I/DD's, and she uses her expertise by offering consultations and visioning sessions to help people save time and money without having to re-invent the wheel.

We encourage you to visit [www.autismhousingnetwork.org](http://www.autismhousingnetwork.org) and make use of the valuable resources they provide.



## this is not fake news!

by Aaron Vorell, Executive Director / Casa de Amma

Recently it seems more and more statistics have been coming across my desk, statistics that I think even those familiar with disabilities often don't hear. While the answers aren't easy, the facts help us realize just how urgent the situation is.

According to a recent presentation by Lauren Libero, Autism Specialist for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), in California the total population of people served by the Regional Centers increased 42% from 2008 to 2018. During that time individuals under the age of 22 with a diagnosis of autism has almost doubled! While the opportunities for housing and supports for adults with disabilities is certainly limited now, children make up 80% of the total population of individuals with autism. So, this begs the questions, how will we support this growing number in the next 10 to 20 years? Just to meet today's demand, a 22% increase in residential supports is immediately needed. **What can we do?**

### Here are some suggestions that anyone can do to help —

First, support advocacy organizations that are on the front line of helping change policies and shine the light on the issues. A couple of wonderful examples are **Coalition for Community Choice** and **Together for Choice**. I recommend you Google™ them both and see for yourself the amazing resources they offer and the benefits of becoming a member.

Second, write letters or call policy makers. Whether it is your congressman or senator, the people making policy decisions need to hear your stories! Especially if you are personally impacted by someone with disabilities, they need to hear your story from your perspective and what your family member needs.

Third, support your local organizations who are an example of residential and support options for those with disabilities. These organizations, though they often have long waiting lists, are an example to those who are willing to create similar local options. Ways to support these organizations are through social media posts, attending events and making donations.

Lastly, share this and other similar stories with your friends and family. Other than families directly affected by a loved one with disabilities, people tend to be unaware of the crisis at hand. With over 5 million citizens of the United States with intellectual / developmental disabilities, this number is significant — **and growing!** At Casa de Amma and the IAC Group, we are trying to play a small part in the need for change but we need everyone's help.

**We appreciate in advance your willingness to take one of these steps.**



[www.casadeamma.org](http://www.casadeamma.org)