Is There Really No Place Like Home? An Exploratory Study of the Impact of Non-Visitable Homes on Wheelchair Users

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Partners

- NCIL
- APRIL
- Concrete Change
Background

• Much of the U.S. housing stock does not facilitate social opportunities for the growing number of people living with mobility disabilities
• Several Healthy People 2020 objectives address this problem

• Goal:
To explore and document the lived experience of wheelchair users in attempting to visit the inaccessible homes of family members and friends

Progress to Date

• Qualitative interviews conducted with 16 wheelchair users with diversity of age, sex, U.S. location, race/ethnicity, SES, disabilities, and equipment type
• Interviews transcribed and data coded using Atlas-ti software
• Data analyzed using phenomenological reduction to determine the essence of the experience
Overarching Themes

• Social Isolation
• Assault to dignity
• Health consequences
• Difficulty discussing the issue of home barriers

Lessons Learned

• Many participants emphasized that discussing home barriers with family members and friends was extremely difficult

  “First of all I don’t think I’ve ever had a full on conversation about it. It’s not even something that’s comfortable to have a conversation about because so much of it feels like you’re trying to make the other person feel guilty or they feel defensive about it.”
In Progress

• Two page tear-out resource on discussing home barriers with family/friends and creating temporary access will be published in APMR next month
• Reeve Foundation funded a small grant to create an online visitability resource for their website—in progress

Next Steps

• Collect quantitative data on effects of invisitable homes with validated survey questions
• Conduct more extensive study of the effect of barriers, particularly of different age groups, perspectives, and life experiences
• Explore ways to facilitate productive discussions regarding barrier removal
• Connect disability and aging communities to pursue visitability policy
• Track progress in passing visitability policy nationwide
Implications

• For people with disabilities and homeowners: Information that may assist them discussing and removing home barriers
• For advocates: Data on the effects of invisable homes on individuals and families
• For policymakers: Data on how archaic homebuilding practices affect people with and without disabilities
• For researchers: Understanding of a major source of social isolation

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Freedom from Want
Norman Rockwell

Dinner Party
John Callahan