

## **NCSHA 2012 Annual Awards for Program Excellence**

**Category:** Special Needs Housing  
**Subcategory:** Housing for Persons with Special Needs  
**Entry Name:** Home First Illinois  
**HFA:** Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA)

### ***Background***

In *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999), the U.S. Supreme Court held that unnecessary institutionalization of people with disabilities is discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and people with disabilities are entitled to receive services in the most integrated setting that meets their needs. Under Governor Pat Quinn, the State of Illinois is taking a proactive role to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities and mental health conditions living in community care settings across Illinois. The state's ability to offer community living opportunities hinges not only upon the availability of home- and community-based services, but also the availability of accessible housing that is affordable to people with extremely low incomes.

Governor Quinn created the *Illinois Jobs Now!* capital program, which facilitates job creation in Illinois by using sales tax revenue bond proceeds for public infrastructure and housing construction projects. To meet the overwhelming need for integrated housing for people with disabilities, Governor Quinn and the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) allocated \$15 million in *Illinois Jobs Now!* capital program funds to create Home First Illinois, which was announced in December 2011 in partnership with IFF, a Community Development Financial Institution, and Access Living, a Center for Independent Living.

### ***Program Overview***

Home First Illinois acquires, develops, and owns integrated housing for people with disabilities, providing permanent housing options for people leaving institutions through state and federal transition coordination programs. Using an initial \$15 million commitment from the State of Illinois, Home First Illinois is creating approximately 75 units of integrated housing in the Chicago metropolitan area, and using seed money to leverage loans, tax-exempt bonds, and grants for additional projects statewide.

Home First Illinois purchases scattered-site housing units that are in close proximity to public transit, paying particular attention to vacant and foreclosed units as a way to both stretch acquisition funds and have a positive impact on nearby properties. Once project-based rental subsidies are secured, the units are renovated so they are accessible to wheelchair users, adding permanently to the limited accessible housing stock in Illinois. Transition coordination agencies, like Access Living, identify people in institutions, match them to Home First Illinois units, and ensure they have access to services and supports that maximize their independence. Home First Illinois provides a standard lease that affords residents all the rights and responsibilities of tenancy.

### ***Home First Illinois is Innovative, Replicable***

By converting scattered-site housing stock into integrated, permanent, accessible rental housing for people with disabilities, Home First Illinois is turning the foreclosure crisis into an opportunity. In addition, through the clear separation of ownership, property management, and services

coordination functions, Home First Illinois provides supportive housing that ensures tenants with disabilities are treated the same as tenants without disabilities.

Programs focused on the acquisition and re-use of foreclosed properties typically focus on resale rather than renting the units. Meanwhile, many private investors are sitting on vacant homes without much regard for property upkeep. Home First Illinois' strategy of acquiring vacant properties at historically low prices and putting them to good, long-term use as integrated, accessible rental housing for people with disabilities is an investment that other states can replicate to simultaneously comply with Olmstead and contribute to the stabilization of buildings and neighborhoods.

### ***Home First Illinois Responds to Important State Housing Needs***

As detailed in an accompanying visual aid, the State of Illinois is implementing plans to provide access to community-based housing for thousands of residents with disabilities who desire it. By purchasing a few condominiums in each of a number of elevator buildings near public transit, Home First Illinois capitalizes on low housing prices, puts vacant units into use, and focuses construction activity to ensure the unit's interior is accessible – creating accessible housing stock that will remain available to people with disabilities for many years.

### ***Home First Illinois Effectively Employs Partnerships***

Home First Illinois was made possible with the financial support of the State of Illinois, local housing authorities, banks, and philanthropic organizations, and the expertise of nonprofits, advocates, and services providers. In addition to a \$15 million grant from the State of Illinois to be used toward acquisition and rehabilitation of housing units, Home First Illinois received a \$4 million grant from Chase Bank, and operating funding for Home First Illinois staff from Chicago Community Trust.

Agreeing that Home First Illinois is an excellent opportunity to form a partnership to remove barriers to the deinstitutionalization of people with disabilities, the Chicago Housing Authority agreed to provide project-based rental assistance for Home First Illinois units located in Chicago. In addition, the Housing Authority of Cook County selected IFF as a developer eligible to receive project-based rental assistance, supporting the expansion of Home First Illinois into Chicago's suburbs.

### ***Home First Illinois Demonstrates Effective Use of Resources, Measurable Benefits***

The most important benefit of Home First Illinois is the hardest to quantify – it enables people with disabilities to live independently within the community. An accompanying visual aid features testimonials from people who have recently been transitioned from nursing homes to the community through state-sponsored programs run by Access Living.

Using the \$15 million commitment from the State of Illinois, Home First Illinois will acquire, renovate, and lease approximately 75 units to people with disabilities who are leaving nursing homes, at an average cost of \$200,000 per unit including all soft costs. These units, along with units created through future Home First Illinois projects, will be newly available to people leaving institutional care, providing a dual measurable benefit – assisting the State of Illinois in transitioning certain numbers of people to the community, and providing monetary savings.

In terms of monetary savings, in 2011, the Medicaid reimbursement rate for one day in an Illinois nursing home was \$120.30, or about \$43,900 per year. In addition to the Medicaid

payment, the nursing home also collects the vast majority of a person's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) check – about \$7,600 for a basic SSI check – bringing the total annual cost of a Medicaid/SSI recipient's stay in a nursing home to about **\$51,500 per year**. In contrast, a \$200,000 capital investment in a one-bedroom home that will be available for 30 years, plus a commitment of rental subsidy that totals an estimated \$225,000 over 30 years, combines to a \$425,000 investment, or less than **\$14,200 per year** for housing.

On the services side, like many states, home and community-based services through Medicaid waivers prohibit states from spending more on waiver services than it would cost to provide institutional care. Illinois has provided increased authority to transfer Medicaid savings from institutional care to home and community based services. A 2009 study<sup>1</sup> of 177 people living in supportive housing in Illinois found significant Medicaid services reimbursement savings for residents who had left nursing homes and inpatient psychiatric care, as they shifted to less-costly outpatient Medicaid services and preventive care.

### ***Home First Illinois Relies on Objectives with a Proven Track Record of Success***

Home First Illinois builds on proven national and local community reintegration efforts:

- 1) The Money Follows the Person (MFP) program, authorized by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, provides incentives to states to transition people from long-term care to community-based settings. The 2010 annual MFP report<sup>2</sup> noted participants' high levels of satisfaction with life after one year in the community, and cited the lack of accessible, affordable housing as one of the primary barriers to transition success. As of June 22, 2012, Illinois has transitioned 571 MFP participants.
- 2) Funded primarily by the State of Illinois, Illinois' Community Reintegration Program supports organizations such as Access Living and Progress Center for Independent Living in their efforts to transition people from nursing homes to community-based housing and services. By May 2012, the Community Reintegration Program had transitioned 2,097 people into the community.

### ***Home First Illinois Achieves Strategic Objectives***

By focusing entirely on acquiring scattered-site housing, making it accessible, remaining in place as the owner, and partnering with agencies that help tenants access community-based services, Home First Illinois is creating a permanent stock of integrated, accessible, affordable housing that offers a community-living option for people leaving institutions. Housing created under Home First Illinois is supportive without being tethered to a specific service provider, respecting the right of people with disabilities to tenancy that is neither contingent upon participation in services nor based upon diagnoses.

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<sup>1</sup> Heartland Alliance Mid-America Institute on Poverty. "Supportive Housing in Illinois: A Wise Investment." April 2009.  
<http://www.heartlandalliance.org/whatwedo/advocacy/reports/supportive-housing-illinois.html>

<sup>2</sup> Irving, C. et al. Mathematica Policy Research. "Money Follows the Person 2010 Annual Evaluation Report." October 7, 2011.  
[http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/health/MFP\\_2010\\_annual.pdf](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/health/MFP_2010_annual.pdf)



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Pat Quinn, Governor

## **Guide to Home First Illinois Visual Aid Attachments**

1. Illinois' Long Term Care Reform & Rebalancing Housing Needs
2. Statements from people transitioned from institutions to the community
3. Home First Illinois Brochure
4. Home First Illinois press release
5. Photos from the launch of Home First Illinois
6. News coverage for Home First Illinois

Long Term Care Reform & Rebalancing Housing Needs:				
Impetus	Population Served	Transition Goals (as of 12/2011)	Housing Type (if specified)	Impacted Area
<b>Money Follows the Person (MFP):</b> Enacted by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, the MFP Rebalancing Demonstration is part of a comprehensive, coordinated strategy to assist States, in collaboration with stakeholders, to make widespread changes to their long-term care support systems and assist reduce reliance on institutional care, while developing community-based long-term care opportunities	Mental Illness	640 over 5 years	Scattered site supportive housing; Managed site supportive housing; Supportive Living Facilities; MFP Demonstration Program provides enhanced State match the first year of transition	Statewide
	Aging	1318 over 5 years		
	Developmental Disabilities	105 over 5 years		
	Physical Disabilities	1360 over 5 years		
	TOTAL	3423 over 5 years		
<b>Williams Consent Decree*:</b> In the Williams v. Quinn lawsuit (2005), plaintiffs alleged that they were segregated and institutionalized in Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMDs) and that they denied them the opportunity to live in integrated settings (in violation of the ADA)	Persons with Mental Illness	Roughly <b>4,500 persons residing in IMDs</b> (100% of Class) are to be evaluated in 5 years. Those able and willing to be transitioned, will be within 5 years	Lawsuit specifies community-based housing with no more than 25% class members in any given development	Statewide  <i>mostly Chicago Metro Area</i>
	<i>Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMDs)</i>	Year 1 (ends 6/30/2012) – screening and assessment / transition 256 residents	Scattered site supportive housing; Managed site supportive housing	
		Year 2 (ends 6/30/2013) –transition 384 residents		
<b>Ligas Consent Decree*:</b> In the Ligas V. Maram lawsuit (2005), plaintiffs alleged that thy were segregated and institutionalized in private State-funded Intermediate Care Facilities for People with Developmental Disabilities (ICF-DDs) which provide on-site long-term care services for individuals with developmental disabilities. The case was settled and on June 15, 2011. Consent decree, and draft implementation plan available at <a href="http://www.dhs.state.il.us">www.dhs.state.il.us</a>	Persons with Developmental Disabilities	<b>6,000 ICF-DD residents who desire placement in the community</b> are to transition to the most integrated community-based setting appropriate for their individual needs (as of 12/2011)	"Community housing of no more than 8 beds", or ICF-DD.	Statewide
	<i>Intermediate Care Facilities for People with Developmental Disabilities (ICF-DDs)</i>	<b>3,000 people with developmental disabilities currently living at home without services</b> are to be given access to community services (as of 12/2011)		
<b>Colbert v. Quinn Case*</b> Lawsuit filed on behalf of persons with disabilities who are unnecessarily confined to skilled nursing facilities (SNF) nursing homes in Cook County as a prerequisite to receiving services. The consent decree was entered into on 12/20/2011. Cost to State must be budget neutral	All Residents in State-Funded SNFs in Cook County. Includes all disabilities and older adults	Approximately <b>14,000 to 20,000 persons may be impacted by this settlement</b>	Private Residence; Supportive Living Facility; Permanent Supportive Housing; or other appropriate supported or supervised residential setting	Cook County
		Consent Decree provides up to \$10 million for housing support first 1,100 persons to transition		
<b>Facilities Closures</b> Closure of four State Operated Developmental Centers (SODCs) is expected in the next several years	Residents in State Operated Developmental Centers (SODCs)	<b>Four (4) SODC</b> facilities state wide expected to be impacted	ICF-DDs; Community Integrated Living Arrangements (CILAs)	Statewide
		<b>20 transitions</b> residents transitioned per month		
		Transitions ongoing until 2015		
<b>* Based on the</b> Olmstead v. L.C. (1999) decision in which the U.S. Supreme Court held that unnecessary institutionalization of people with disabilities is discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and that people with disabilities have the right to receive services in the least restrictive living environment, a limited number of lawsuits were brought against the State of Illinois that may impact deinstitutionalization and rebalancing of long term care housing and services provision throughout the State. <i>IHDA is not a named party to the Olmstead / ADA lawsuits, but has voluntarily participated in the planning and discussions about meeting the needs created by the litigation, and in providing increased appropriate units.</i>				

## Statements from People Transitioned from Institutions to the Community

All of the following people worked with Access Living to find housing and transition out of institutions and back into the community within the last year.

Delores, a 56-year-old, was placed in a nursing home after removal of a brain tumor:

*"I...was staying with someone and had numerous surgeries on my right wrist. Later I started to have migraines which led to me having to have a MRI, which determined I had a small tumor under my brain. I was in surgery for 15 hours which led to how I got to [a nursing home in Chicago] for after care. After 6 months, I started feeling somewhat better so my social worker got me in contact with Access Living and they worked with me getting out of the nursing home into my own apartment 3 months later.*

*When I first got out, I was excited but somewhat lonely for I was used to always being around someone. But the freedom gave me choice to go out and find positive things to do to occupy my time. So now it is almost five months and everyone at Access Living is being so helpful about my well being...I'm thankful and hope to continue to be part of their family."*

Dennis, a 57-year-old, was placed in a nursing home after having a stroke:

*"I was living my life but since the stroke, it's been rough. The nursing home is not a place that I would like to live. I found out about Access Living through someone at the nursing home. My sister helped me. My first night out, I was lonely. I feel a relief that I'm not in nursing facility no more. Your freedom is taken away. Whatever it takes for me not to go back to a nursing facility, I'm going to do. That's a place I do not want to live.*

*First, I want to thank God. If it wasn't for my sister Phyllis helping me, I don't know where I would be now. Since finding out about Access Living was a blessing to me. There's nothing like having your own. I'm going to continue to do my best to work with Access Living. I love my apartment and my freedom."*

Robert, a 57-year-old, was first placed in a nursing home after breaking his hip:

*"Life before the nursing home was regular, everyday living, working and being with your family and friends. September 8, 2008 is a day I will always remember. I had a seizure and fell down the basement stairs and broke my hip pretty bad. I was taken to [a hospital] where I was fixed up and they also noticed a...cyst, which they cut off and sent me to [a nursing home in Chicago] because I didn't have a place to go and be looked after.*

*My arrival at [the nursing home] was somewhat a change for me because it was something I had never experienced. I had no insurance and was denied therapy. I was able to go to doctor appointments but not able to use wheelchairs or walkers. I was housed with three other people with different illnesses. The food was lousy and came when it did...after 6 or 7 months, I was given an eviction notice because of no insurance but [then] my SSI became approved...[then] the doctor...determined I had colon cancer. This kept me in the nursing home for another 2 years and started to be the worst time of my life.*

*I was confined to the bed once again and could not get any help from anyone except my family from the outside. I was told by a family member about Access Living...Access Living gave hope and opportunity to...relate to the community and get housing. Access Living is a program that every living body in the nursing home should be told about so they could have a chance to get their lives back to normal."*



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## Home First Illinois: Program Description

To address the need for integrated housing for people with disabilities, IFF and Access Living launched Home First Illinois (HFI). Through this initiative, IFF will develop, own, and manage accessible homes—integrated within the community—that will remain permanently affordable to very low-income people with disabilities.

### What is HFI's purpose?

Home First Illinois develops integrated, accessible, and affordable homes, providing permanent, community-based housing to people with disabilities.

These homes address a strong need in Illinois, where a disproportionate number of low-income people with disabilities are living in State-funded institutions.

### Why was HFI developed?

In 1999, the Supreme Court held that people with disabilities have a right, under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to live in the least restrictive setting possible.

Delays in complying with this decision resulted in three class action lawsuits which were settled by the State of Illinois. Today, Illinois is required to assess approximately 26,000 people with disabilities, most living in institutions and nursing homes, and assist those who wish to transition to the community.

IFF designed HFI to focus on the development and operation of integrated, permanent housing options for people with disabilities who wish to live in the community.

### How does HFI work?

HFI acquires and develops scattered-site housing, with an emphasis on increasing accessible housing options.

HFI owns the units and oversees the property manager, so that residents have an informed and committed landlord, and partners with providers that help residents access community-based services.

Because people with disabilities often have extremely low incomes, HFI ensures that each unit has a source of rental subsidy so that tenants will have enough disposable income for food, transportation, and out-of-pocket medical costs.

*“Community integrated housing is a win-win strategy for everyone—it is less expensive, but more importantly it gives people with disabilities a gateway to independence.”*

—Joe Neri, IFF's Chief Executive Officer

### Getting Involved

This important issue requires ongoing support and community involvement.

#### ✓ Elected officials

Elected officials can support the civil rights of people with disabilities by shifting State and federal resources from institutions to community-based housing and services.

#### ✓ Community members

Community members can facilitate community-based living by showing up at public hearings to demonstrate their support for local efforts to create integrated housing options for people with disabilities.

#### ✓ Financial partners

Financial partners make this initiative possible, and their investments have a lasting community impact.

For further information, please contact:

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## IFF's Affordable Housing Experience

- Lending and real estate consulting for affordable housing projects started in 2005.
- Specialized housing loan products were introduced in 2008. Today, IFF's affordable housing loan program supports affordable housing developers through low-cost, flexible financing for real estate projects across our five-state region.
- In 2009, IFF was awarded \$12.27 million in Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds to rehab vacant properties for supportive housing in nine Illinois counties.
- In 2011, IFF embarked on a number of initiatives:
  - IFF launched the West Cook Housing Collaborative, a consortium of five west suburban municipalities working together to increase affordable homeownership options near public transit, an effort backed by \$7.3 million in federal funds.
  - IFF joined the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago, providing access to affordable capital for housing lending.
  - And, IFF created Home First Illinois, an initiative to develop and operate integrated housing for people with disabilities.

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IFF is a nonprofit lender and real estate consultant dedicated to strengthening nonprofits and the communities they serve.

We work with nonprofits in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, and Wisconsin, with a focus on those that serve low-income communities and special needs populations.

To learn more about IFF, visit [iff.org](http://iff.org).





OFFICE OF GOVERNOR PAT QUINN

# NEWS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Friday, December 16, 2011

## **Governor Quinn Announces Public-Private Initiative to Grow Independent Housing for Persons with Disabilities**

*State Investment Spurs Private Investment in Innovative Housing Program, Returns Vacant Properties to Productive Use*

CHICAGO – December 16, 2011. Governor Pat Quinn today announced the commitment of \$15 million in *Illinois Jobs Now!* capital program funds to launch a housing program to help people with disabilities live independently. Joined by partners and advocates, Governor Quinn laid out plans for the first phase of the new public-private Home First Illinois initiative. In this first phase, accessibility features will be added to 18 condominium units in Chicago, creating new independent living opportunities for Illinoisans with disabilities and returning vacant housing to productive use.

"By increasing accessible and affordable housing opportunities for our state's residents with disabilities, we are helping to increase their independence and improve their quality of life," Governor Quinn said. "Through this program and other initiatives, we are expanding choices for those who want to live in the community. This program also will help Illinois' economy by turning vacant housing into attractive, accessible units."

Under Governor Quinn, the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) provided financing to nonprofit lender IFF to develop the program. The state's commitment leveraged an additional \$4 million investment from Chase bank, and an additional \$125,000 in operational support from The Chicago Community Trust.

Over the next three years, the Home First Illinois initiative will develop nearly 100 accessible and affordable homes, creating permanent affordable housing opportunities for an estimated 145 people with disabilities. Accessibility features can include wider doorways, bathroom handles or a flashing light system to notify residents when someone is visiting.

In the first phase, 18 units will be rehabilitated and are anticipated to be ready for occupancy in the Chicago area in six months. IFF, which will manage the units, will use the capital program funding to target currently vacant units in elevator buildings to enhance accessibility. After renovations are complete, not-for-profit Access Living will provide referrals and help individuals with physical disabilities move from institutions into the newly-accessible community settings.

"This collaboration of nonprofit, public, private and philanthropic partners takes an innovative 'strength-in-numbers' approach to eliminate housing barriers for Illinois residents who have disabilities," IHDA Executive Director Mary Kenney said.

-MORE-



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR PAT QUINN

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# NEWS

"This is private/public partnership at its best," said Marca Bristo, President and CEO of Access Living. "The purchase of distressed properties will help communities grow stronger, and people with disabilities in institutions will find a place to live in the community."

Governor Quinn included \$130 million in the *Illinois Jobs Now!* capital program for affordable and supportive housing, demonstrating his administration's commitment to creating additional opportunities for people with disabilities to live independently. The first phase of the Home First Illinois initiative will create 21 construction jobs. Chase pledged an additional \$4 million toward the initiative in support of future phases of development and the creation more jobs.

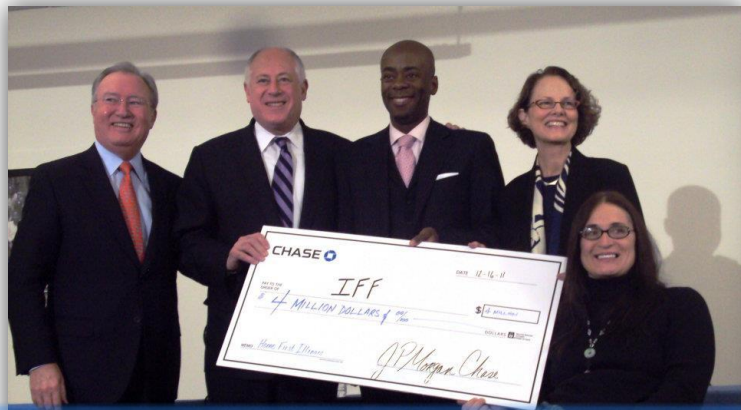
"This project is helping expand opportunities for people with disabilities to be part of our communities," IFF CEO Joe Neri said. "The initial public funding under the state of Illinois' capital program helped leverage additional support from critical partners, such as Chase, to expand the reach of this initiative."

"JPMorgan Chase's commitment to strengthening our communities by increasing access to capital is reflected in this important housing initiative and is a great example of the best type of partnership. Providing appropriate and affordable housing and creating jobs has multiple benefits within our communities both socially and economically," said Glenn Tilton, JPMorgan Chase Chairman of the Midwest.

## About IHDA

The Illinois Housing Development Authority ([www.ihda.org](http://www.ihda.org)) is an independent, self-supporting bonding authority that finances the creation and preservation of affordable housing throughout Illinois. Since 1967, IHDA has allocated more than \$10.6 billion to finance more than 215,000 affordable housing units for the residents of Illinois.

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**Governor Pat Quinn announces the Home First Illinois initiative at a news conference on December 16, 2011. Governor Quinn is joined by representatives of IFF, Access Living and Chase Bank.**



**Governor Pat Quinn meets Illinois residents who have transitioned into community care over the past year.**



**"By increasing accessible and affordable housing opportunities for our state's residents with disabilities, we are helping to increase their independence and improve their quality of life." - Governor Quinn**



**News media covering the Chicago event included Associated Press, ABC 7, NBC 5, WBEZ public radio and the Illinois Radio Network.**



## Ill. to provide \$15 million for affordable housing

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By Associated Press KAREN HAWKINS

Created: Friday, December 16, 2011 3:15 p.m. CDT

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CHICAGO (AP) — Gov. Pat Quinn announced \$15 million in state funding Friday for a Chicago-area program aimed at moving people with disabilities out of institutions and into homes of their own.

Home First Illinois will renovate about 100 units of affordable housing for 145 people over the next three years. The initiative will save the state money, keep people healthier and put vacant housing back in use, advocates said.

Under the \$19 million plan, nonprofit lender IFF will purchase and develop accessible housing that will be rented to low-income people with disabilities who are referred by Access Living, a Chicago non-profit organization. Additional funding will come from JP Morgan Chase and the Chicago Community Trust.

Access Living President and CEO Marca Bristo estimated there are 20,000 people with disabilities in Cook County nursing homes. People with disabilities are often institutionalized unnecessarily because they can't afford to live on their own, she said.

But independent living costs about half of what it costs to house someone in an institution, where the money must cover facility expenses such as staff, maintenance and insurance, Bristo said. In a home setting, the expenses are rent, medical costs and personal assistants if they're needed for just one person, rather than an entire building.

And, "people are healthier when they're out of institutions," she said.

Quinn said the goal is to have people live with as much independence as possible.

"I see this next three years as really carrying out the movement of community care," Quinn said. "We have to do this in Illinois, we can't have folks in institutions."

IFF hopes to have the first 18 units available in the next six months.

James Felt, 51, of Chicago, spent most of the past year in a nursing home after losing the toes on his right foot to frostbite last winter and not being able to work. He recently moved out with funding from a state program that helps people transition out of institutions but doesn't give them a place to go the way Home First Illinois will.

Getting his own apartment on Chicago's North Side with a housing voucher has been liberating, he said.

"They've given me my life back," Felt said of Access Living staff. "I'd probably still be in that nursing home without them."

Quinn said he would eventually like to see the independent living program expanded statewide.



## Home First Illinois: State Puts \$15 Million Toward Affordable Housing For Disabled



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Illinois has been [criticized in the past](#) for placing [people with developmental disabilities in state-run institutions](#). Mental health advocates and those concerned about the state's dismal financial situation have criticized the practice as being bad for the disabled and for the budget. Now, Gov. Pat Quinn is looking to make some changes.

Quinn announced Friday that he would set aside \$15 million from the "Illinois Jobs Now!" program to [launch "Home First Illinois," an affordable housing program for people with disabilities](#), according to the Illinois Housing Development Authority.

"By increasing accessible and affordable housing opportunities for our state's residents with disabilities, we are helping to increase their independence and improve their quality of life," Quinn said in a statement. "Through this program and other initiatives, we are expanding choices for those who want to live in the community. This program also will help Illinois' economy by turning vacant housing into attractive, accessible units."

Nonprofit lender IFF will develop the program, and the state has secured an additional \$4 million from Chase bank and \$125,000 from the Chicago Community Trust. Chicago non-profit Access Living will help place people in the new homes, the first of which are expected to be ready in the next six months.

"Home First Illinois" will develop about 100 affordable and accessible homes in the next three years, according to the IHDA, which will give about 145 people with disabilities permanent residences.

Last year, Medill Reports looked into the state's current system, and found that [the cost to taxpayers has been steep](#):

It costs \$142,533 annually to house a developmentally disabled individual in an Illinois state developmental center. By comparison, the annual cost of community care is about \$53,291, for a savings of nearly \$100,000, or 63 percent, according to a report by the governor's Taxpayer Action Board.

Roughly \$547 million was spent on private and public institutional care in Illinois in 2006. The state ranked fourth in the nation in the number of disabled in state institutions, with 2,385 individuals in 2008.

"Illinois wastes hundreds of million dollars by funding institutional options when what families want are community living arrangement options," Tony Paulauski, president of nonprofit advocacy group Arc of Illinois, told Medill.

Quinn said he [eventually wants to see the program expanded statewide](#), according to the Associated Press.

"I see this next three years as really carrying out the movement of community care," Quinn said. "We have to do this in Illinois, we can't have folks in institutions."

December 19, 2011 | Tracey | [Comments 1](#)

### New Housing Opportunities for Chicago's Disabled

Illinois is getting \$15 million to rehab vacant Chicago condos into homes where residents with physical disabilities can live independently.

This new public-private Home First Illinois initiative is getting the funds from the Illinois Jobs Now! capital program.

For the first phase of the project, 18 condos in the Chicago area will be rehabbed. Nonprofit lender IFF, which received financing for the program from the Illinois Housing Development Authority, will use the funds to target already vacant units in buildings with elevators.



After renovations are completed and accessibility features are added — including wider doors, bathroom handles and flashing light systems to notify residents when someone is visiting — not-for-profit Access Living will help residents with physical disabilities move from institutions into the new community setting.

This project is a double win-win: It will create jobs, provide new living opportunities for Illinois' physically disabled, save the state money and fill up vacant [Chicago real estate](#).

"By increasing accessible and affordable housing opportunities for our state's residents with disabilities, we are helping to increase their independence and improve their quality of life," Governor Quinn said. "Through this program and other initiatives, we are expanding choices for those who want to live in the community.

"This program also will help Illinois' economy by turning vacant housing into attractive, accessible units."

Over the next three years, the Home First Illinois initiative will develop close to 100 accessible homes to create permanent, affordable housing opportunities for an estimated 145 residents with physical disabilities.

The project, which will create 21 construction jobs, is also getting \$4 million from Chase Bank and an additional \$125,000 in operational support from The Chicago Community Trust.

"This is private/public partnership at its best," said Marca Bristo, President and CEO of [Access Living](#). "The purchase of distressed properties will help communities grow stronger, and people with disabilities in institutions will find a place to live in the community."

# Chicago Tribune

*Breaking News, Since 1847*

## Vacant condos ripe for accessible, affordable housing

January 08, 2012 | Mary Ellen Podmolik | The Home Front

Two local organizations, IFF and Access Living, are in the early stages of developing a new model of [affordable](#) housing, first in Chicago and then throughout Illinois, for people with disabilities who want to live on their own.

Armed with a budget of slightly more than \$19 million, the Home First Illinois program also will take a crack at filling up some of the city's empty condominiums. That's because the program revolves around the idea of placing people with disabilities in scattered-site housing rather than grouped together in state-funded or private institutions.

"It's a new model for affordable housing," said Michelle Hoereth, director of housing for IFF, a nonprofit lender and real estate consultant that helps nonprofit organizations in the Midwest. "We can purchase condos that are foreclosed, in a short sale or the owner just wants to sell. There are plenty of units that aren't distressed but are vacant."

[Funding](#) for the effort includes \$15 million from the state, \$4 million from Chase bank and \$125,000 from the Chicago Community Trust. So far, the program has received \$5 million in state funds that will be used to purchase and renovate 18 to 20 condos within Chicago and to cover such costs as association fees and property taxes.

IFF will be the legal owner of the condos and will rent them to tenants at subsidized rates.

Just like any potential homebuyer, IFF has a list of certain must-haves. The condos must be in safe neighborhoods and accessible, so most will be in elevator buildings. IFF will make the adaptations necessary within units to make them 100 percent accessible for people with physical disabilities. The buildings must have easy access to public transportation and have a concentration of amenities, like a grocery store, in the immediate neighborhood.

Most are likely to be concentrated on the North and Northwest sides, and the CTA's rehabilitation project to make the Brown Line more accessible makes the corridor a natural place to look for units, said Kristine Giornalista, a senior project manager at IFF. Some of the neighborhoods under review are Uptown, Edgewater, Lakeview and Lincoln Square.

The one- and two-bedroom units are expected to have acquisition [costs](#) of no more than \$150,000 each.

"These aren't the locations you typically look (to) for affordable housing, because they tend to be expensive and the market is so desirable," Giornalista said. "But because of the current real estate market, there are condos that are available for a lot less than they would be any other time. There are a surprising number of really good-looking units."

Also like a traditional homebuyer, IFF plans to do its due diligence to ensure a condo building is on strong financial footing because it plans to hold the units as a [long-term investment](#). It will have to make sure a condo association's bylaws allow it to act as an owner-investor, but at the same time IFF would prefer not to have too many other renters in a building.

"You don't want to buy into a financial mess," Giornalista said. "At the end of the day, I think condo associations should welcome our purchases because now they're going to have an institutional investor in their building. It means their assessments are going to be paid on time."