



SHEDD Webinar #1 Summary

Title: Building Our Tool SHEDD

Date: November 19, 2021 12:00pm - 1:30pm

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For information on SHEDD and to access the tool: www.toolSHEDD.ca

About SHEDD

Successful Housing Elements and Developmental Disabilities (SHEDD) began as a research project to identify key elements of housing design and construction (e.g., materials, space) that can help to support people labeled with developmental disabilities and exceptional behaviours that challenge.* The SHEDD tool was developed to promote built environments that can improve the wellbeing and community participation of adults with developmental disabilities. Further information about SHEDD can be found at www.toolSHEDD.ca

The current project is funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connection Grant (2021-2022) and aims to:

1. Share information about the SHEDD research and tool;
2. Make connections and share ideas about housing design with self-advocates, families, housing design and planning professionals, developmental service professionals and researchers; and,
3. Identify future research collaborations and ways to improve the SHEDD tool.

** Our team uses the term 'behaviours that challenge' to emphasize that behaviours such as self-harm, aggression, and property damage are forms of communication that may challenge people such as caregivers who provide support for people labeled with a disability.*

What was the *Building Our Tool Shedd* webinar about?

This was the first webinar of a four-part series that will help to make connections and share ideas about improving built environments, such as the physical characteristics of homes and universal housing design, which aims to be useable by everyone regardless of their abilities.

This webinar included:

- A video of self-advocates and their parents and support workers talking about their homes;
- A presentation that gave an overview of the SHEDD research and introduced the SHEDD tool; and,
- A panel discussion where the presenters answered audience questions.

Who were the presenters?

Moderator:

- Yani Hamdani, PhD. Assistant Professor, Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, University of Toronto; Clinician-Scientist, CAMH

Panelists:

- Robert Balogh, PhD. Associate Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, Ontario Tech University
- Kristin Dobranowski, MHSc. Graduate Thesis Coordinator Ontario Tech University
- Jane Casson, MArch. SHEDD Project Coordinator, Intern Architect

Family Video:

- Jenny Heath, Self-advocate
- Brenda McCabe, Self-advocate
- Kristi Westman, Self-advocate
- Bonnie Heath, Family leader, SHEDD collaborator
- Marge McCabe, Family leader, SHEDD collaborator
- Cindy Walker, support person
- Erin Bellavance, support person

What did the researchers find?

The research explored successful physical space and design for behaviours that challenge in group home settings. It involved:

- A literature review;
- Interviews with key stakeholders (developmental agencies, staff, families, and individuals labelled with developmental disabilities); and,
- Case studies of real housing examples.

Successful built environment strategies for supporting people with behaviours that challenge were identified, and organized under six themes:

- Building layout and spatial organization (e.g. open hallways, ramps, location of furniture)
- Sensory experience and stimulation (e.g. noise reduction through echo-proofing, lighting)
- Physical environment
- Resident and staff safety (e.g. using durable materials, screwing picture frames into walls, keeping sharp objects in a secure location)
- Home-likeness (e.g. how much the residence feels like a home)
- Access to resources (e.g. walkie talkies, public transportation)

Other important considerations for behaviours that challenge included housing type, staff availability, and history of resettlement. See this [journal publication](#) for more details about the literature review. This study focused on people who lived in homes supported by paid staff.

What did the researchers do with the research results?

The researchers developed the [SHEDD Tool](#). It is a five-page document that includes an overview of the project, design considerations, and design modifications with descriptions and photos from real-life examples. Many of the suggested modifications focused on addressing serious behaviours, such as self-harm, aggression, and property damage.

How can the SHEDD tool help with housing planning and design?

The SHEDD tool provides information about

- Design considerations: Let's look at the building (inside and out): How bright is it? How big are the rooms? How is the outdoor space used? Is the environment contributing to self-injury, aggression towards others or destruction of physical property?
- Design principles: Where are the rooms located? Are there locks in high-risk areas? What colours are the walls?
- Design modifications: What are some specific suggestions for living areas, kitchens, bedroom, and bathrooms?

Who can use this tool?

- People labelled with a disability, people who care for them, and people who design and care for the buildings in which they live. This includes self-advocates, families, housing planners, builders, architects and building managers.
- The tool can be incorporated into universal home design elements for everyone.

Where can you find this tool?

You can access the tool for free on www.toolshedd.ca

Panel Discussion and Audience Q&A

Question: **Did something surprise you doing this research?**

Answer:

- Support workers are also sensitive to the environment they work in; their guidance is very helpful for home design processes.
- Modifying the built environment can potentially be a cost-effective solution in providing support for people with behaviours that challenge, and improve their health, safety and well-being.

Question: **Are homes for adults with developmental disabilities typically divided by gender?**

Answer:

- Yes, but some are mixed.

Question: **How do physical accommodations impact behaviour and the staff?**

Answer:

- Research shows that built environment modifications can decrease behaviours that challenge, which can create more time for staff to support residents with activities that they choose, enjoy or are meaningful to them, rather than focusing on monitoring their behaviours.

Question: **How can a family use this tool?**

Answer:

- There are photos of design elements in the SHEDD tool that can give families concrete examples of modifications that have been helpful in group homes. In the future, the SHEDD team plans to build a more detailed list of ways to design family-created homes, including a list of materials and where they can be purchased to provide families with direct solutions.

Question: **Have you considered the application of this research to populations of older adults who may also have behaviours that challenge due to dementia, for example?**

Answer:

- There are examples of research and recommendations for universal design for people with dementia that are similar to the SHEDD tool. Combining the research and recommendations will be important for universal design that can help all people live healthy and well in the homes that they choose.



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Question: Is there any focus on using nontoxic materials, as most people with disabilities are immune-compromised?

Answer:

- The research does not explicitly discuss hazardous materials. However this is something that can be considered for the next phase of the SHEDD research and tool.

Question: How will we know if the tool is successful?

Answer:

- The SHEDD tool is a living project. The research team wants to continue improving it and making it useful and usable for different situations and settings. The tool will be successful if it meets the needs of people with developmental disabilities in planning their homes. Please provide [feedback on the tool](#) to share your perspective.

Question: This seems to be most helpful for congregate living (4-5 people). What about people who live more independently and not in a large home?

Answer:

- Although the SHEDD tool used data obtained mostly from congregate living residences, it is intended to be applicable to all built environments that support the health and wellbeing of people with developmental disabilities and behaviours that challenge. The suggestions for built environments can help people who live in their own home of any size.

Question: What is next for the SHEDD research?

Answer:

- Most of the case studies of group homes were linked to residential agencies in this study. The team wants to learn from family-created homes as well.
- The public policy and funding perspective was not part of this specific project. The purpose of the SHEDD webinars is to make connections and learn from self-advocates, families, housing planners and builders, developmental services and policy decision-makers about how built environments fit into the bigger picture of housing for people with developmental disabilities.
- Webinars #2, 3 and 4 will continue to explore and exchange information and ideas about housing design and developmental disabilities.