

CHAPTER 9

Housing

In this chapter, you will:

- Learn about all the options where you could live and get supports.
- Discover how to locate residential supports and resources.

Possible Options

Survivor Matters

Deciding where you could live is a major decision, both for you and your family. Your age, severity of the injury, and the availability of resources will influence your decision.

There are a number of options regarding where you choose to live. You may:

- live independently;
- live independently with informal support from the family;

- live independently with formal support from an agency such as Home Care or a private agency;
- live in a transitional setting;
- live in an institutional setting.

Family Matters

The family of the survivor may:

- provide all care;
- provide care with informal help from the extended family and friends;
- provide care with formal help from Home Care or a private agency; or
- provide care with informal or formal arrangements for respite.

Respite

Respite gives you a rest from caregiving duties. Informal arrangements may include having another family member (other than the primary family caregiver) provide care or having the survivor go to someone else's home for a period of time. Formal respite may range from having someone from Home Care or a private agency come in a few hours a week to having the

survivor spend several weeks at a group home, personal care home, or special care home.

Local Resources

Your local Alberta Brain Injury Network office can help you identify available residential options and resources in your area (see the Resources chapter for contact numbers). You could also ask the health professionals working with you and your family for a referral to an agency such as Home Care. You can also find Home Care listed in your local telephone book or by calling your Regional Health Authority. Home Care coordinators in your area will know what services are available through your Regional Health Authority and through private agencies.

In addition to lodging, private agencies may offer nursing care, personal care, homemaking help, supervision, or companionship. Check your insurance policies to see if any of these services are covered, especially if these services are not provided by Home Care.

Age and Place of Residence

Your age is significant in the decision of residential options. Small children almost always go home, even with very severe brain injuries. Because of their small size, the family is usually capable of providing the physical care needed. More importantly, many feel a family setting provides the best environment in which to help the child reach their maximum potential. As the child grows, the family's capabilities grow as well, allowing them to adapt and make plans for the future. Older children and adolescents usually go home, especially if they do not require heavy physical care. Home and school become the rehabilitation environment and allow for as normal a life as possible.

For a young adult who had been living independently, the decision is more complicated. Depending on their abilities, it may not be safe for them to continue living independently. If the decision is made to move back to the parental home, adjustments need to be made. Older parents may be unable to provide the supervision needed, or the young adult may resist parental authority and supervision.

For an adult with children, the needs and

safety of everyone in the family must be considered. For an elderly adult with a spouse, the physical and mental ability of the spouse to provide the required level of care must be considered.

Every family is different. The decision you make must be the one that works best for you.

Keep Your Options Open

It is not uncommon to try several residential options in the first few years. As you go through the stages of recovery, your family will discover the extent of their care-giving capabilities and limitations. Your first decision may not be the permanent solution. You may want to move towards progressively more independent living arrangements. Or your family may need more and more assistance as they exhaust their own physical and mental resources.

Family Matters

Feeling Overwhelmed

It is normal to feel overwhelmed by the needs of the survivor. However, this does not mean the survivor should not live at home. Discuss your feelings with the health professionals working with you. They are familiar with the emotions you are going through. Talking to them will

help you realize that the burden of care is not yours alone. In fact, it may lead you to discover more workable living arrangements.

A Home Away from Home

There may come a time when a family decides it is best for the survivor to live in a more structured setting. The first step in this process is to contact your local Regional Health Authority. They will put you in touch with the department responsible for arranging such placements.

The most common places are group homes, personal care homes, and special care homes. Your Home Care worker or other contact will discuss the options available in your area, as well as any waiting lists.

Find out as much as you can about the places you are considering. To do this you can:

- visit the places you think are suitable;
- talk to staff and ask questions;
- talk to some of the people who live there, and ask their opinion;

- visit a variety of homes. It may help you feel more comfortable with the decision;
- discuss together the possible options.

There are currently very few supportive housing options designed for persons with a brain injury. However, it is a recognized area of need, and hopefully more options will become available over time.

Coping with Guilt

Placing a family member in any residential setting outside the home, especially an institutional setting, can be extremely stressful, and it is not uncommon to experience guilt. Your decision does not mean you are abandoning the survivor. Given the needs of your whole family, it may be the best option. You can remain active in the life of the survivor through regular visits and home passes. You may even find your time together is of higher quality.

Discuss your feelings with the Home Care coordinator or the social worker in the survivor's new home. Talk to others who have had to make the same decision, or get in touch with a local brain injury association support group (see the Resources chapter for contact numbers).

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