

Alberta Brain Injury Initiative Survival Guide

Alberta Seniors and Community Supports is pleased to bring you the Alberta Brain Injury Initiative Survival Guide.

The Survival Guide is intended to provide basic information and support to survivors of acquired brain injury and their families. This book will try to point you in the right direction to find the support and resources that are available in Alberta. **It is not meant to answer all of everyone's questions or provide information that can be provided by health professionals or other advisors.**

The aim of this guide is to provide basic, general information that is applicable province-wide. Therefore, individual services and/or agencies that provide services to brain injured survivors are not listed in this book. The Service Coordinators in your area have a listing of resources available in your region. Also, the Alberta Brain Injury Help Line has current and accurate information on various support and advocacy groups located in the province. The Help Line's listing of the various resources is continually updated (see Chapter 13 for contact information).

Additional copies of this guide are available through the Alberta Brain Injury Initiative (ABII) and from Service Coordinators of the Alberta Brain Injury Network (ABIN). Contact information can be found in Chapter 13 of the Survival Guide).

We would like to thank everyone involved in the creation of this guide, especially the many people from within the brain injured community who gave their time, knowledge and input. This project was funded and administered by Alberta Seniors and Community Supports.

Family

Dear Family, Friends, Advocates, and Caregivers,

Although much of this book is written with the survivor as the audience, it is certainly meant for you as well. We know that this is a difficult time for you, and you probably have many questions. We hope this book can be a starting point for you.

Although the parts in this booklet marked “Family Matters” will probably be of special interest to you, you will need to read the entire chapter in order to get all of the information you need.

Survivor

Dear Survivor,

This book is to give information and support to you, the survivor of a brain injury. It is also to help your family, friends, advocates, and caregivers to understand more about your injury, and for you to understand more about what they are going through. Since each brain injury is different, not all of the information in

this guide will apply to you. Alberta Seniors and Community Supports hopes that this book will help you on your journey after your injury.

This book is not meant to be a step-by-step guide to daily living with a brain injury. It is not meant to replace any information provided by the health professionals working with you and your family. This book offers general information on issues you may encounter following a brain injury and will try to give you practical advice. You may find that there will be readjustments at every stage. This book will also try to point you in the right direction to find the support and resources in Alberta that you need.

Recovery from brain injury is a long process. Great improvements may be seen in the first year, and progress may continue for many years. You and your family's adjustment is also a long process. We hope you will find some expression in this book of your own experience - that you will realize you are not alone and your responses to this sudden and major change in life are shared by others.

The suggestions you find in this book are from people living with a brain injury who say these

things work for them. The suggestions are from people who had to relearn simple tasks, who had to learn to live with challenges, and who may have lost friends and family because of their brain injury. These people have figured out how to live with their brain injury and are still learning. We hope you can learn from their suggestions and experiences.

The effects of a brain injury are as individual as you are. While this book will mention many challenges that you may be facing and suggest different ways to overcome these challenges, everyone's experience will be different. You will need to see for yourself what works best for you.

While this book is mostly targeted towards people with brain injuries, it is full of information that will be very useful for your family, friends, advocates, and caregivers. It will help them understand what you are going through. It will also be helpful for you to read the sections called "Family Matters". This is a difficult time for them too, and it will help you understand how they feel.

How To Use This Guide

Throughout the guide there are opportunities for you to write about your own feelings, concerns and experiences. Because there wasn't enough room to provide space for your written responses, we suggest that you begin a journal to record your difficulties and achievements. This will also highlight your accomplishments and serve as an important memory tool.

The end of each Chapter in the Guide has "Notes" pages for your use. These can be used as a reminder as well as a way to record your own experiences.

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