



EFE FACT SHEET

Transitioning People with Disabilities to New Residential Settings

You may have questions and concerns about the process through which people with disabilities are transitioned from one residential provider to another, what to expect in the process, what the rights of people with the disabilities and guardians are, how to select a new residential setting and where to look for help. This fact sheet is intended to assist you and your family member with a disability in making decisions and plans to transition to another residential setting.

Important Questions and Answers for the Transition Process

Q: What makes a good transition?

A: The transition process is meant to provide you and your family member with a disability with choices and information in order to make an informed decision about which residential program will best meet the needs of your family member and where they will be safe and happy, have their ideas and desires incorporated into their lives, and where they will be treated with respect. The proximity of the program to where you live is an important consideration but should not be the only factor. The new residential provider should not only meet the identified service needs, preferences and desires of your family member, but should also work with both of you on an ongoing basis to address changing needs and subsequent concerns.

Q: What should we expect during this transition?

A: During the transition you should expect:

- Meeting(s) to identify other residential settings such as a community-based home, intermediate care facility for people with developmental disabilities (ICFDD), or state operated developmental centers.
- Information about how the referral process will work, how long it may take, the names and contact information of agencies that will assist you and what you can expect each agency to do during the transition process.
- To visit several residential programs so that you can compare those programs and the services each offers. It is important to visit programs several times at different times of the day to make sure there is a good match between what your family member and you want and what the program has to offer.

- To have your questions and concerns answered and addressed in a timely manner.
- To identify a preferred residential provider.

Q: What are rights of my family member with a disability and my rights as the guardian in the transition process?

A: Your family member with a disability is the most integral part of the transition process. He or She has the right to express their preferences or views as to where and with whom they will live and where they will receive treatment or habilitation services. Their preferences and views are critical to the transition process and must be taken into consideration by the treatment team and the guardian when making decisions as to which facility provides the most integrated setting to meet your family member's needs and best fulfills their preferences. You and your family member with a disability have the right to fully participate in meetings in which these decisions are made and to bring anyone to those meetings for support, including an advocate. You and your family member with a disability have the right to look at treatment records, talk with staff or seek other assistance to make sure that your family member's needs, desires, preferences and views are understood and that their rights, including the right to live in the most integrated setting which meets their needs and maximizes their independence, are protected.

Q: What should we look for in a residential facility?

A: When assessing the quality of a new residential setting, observe the following and ask questions regarding:

Is the overall appearance of the home neat and clean? Are the living areas personalized and home-like? How many people share a bedroom?

How many staff are in the home? What is their level of experience?

Are people living in the home involved in planning the activities of the home such as meal planning, shopping or community outings? By what means and how often do the people living in the home go out into the community?

Are the people living in the home involved in all aspects of their home such as setting the table, doing laundry and banking? Are the preferences of the people living in the home solicited and incorporated into the home's activities?

Are the activities and materials offered varied, age appropriate, and individualized to the person? Are activities taking place as scheduled? Are materials available to implement the activity and are they being used? Is watching TV the primary activity offered? Are the people in the home engaged in the activities? Are staff involved in the activity?

Does the staff make an effort to engage people or provide services in a language and manner that the individuals living there understand? What is the staff's attitude towards the people they are serving. How do they interact with individuals? Does the staff interaction have a friendly or mentoring type tone?

Do the administrators and staff seem familiar with the special needs of the people living in the home such as dietary needs, and behavior plans?

What medical and dental services are available ? Are the services provided at the home or are services off-site? What arrangements are made for after hours care and/or emergency services? With what hospital(s) is the residential program affiliated?

What is the program's procedure regarding communicating important information to the guardian related to incidents, injuries, and significant events involving their family member ?

Don't be afraid to talk with staff or the people living in the home. If talking with other families would be helpful, ask the staff for assistance in arranging that communication.

Q: My family member has a severe disability. Can he or she really live in the community?

A: YES. Even individuals with the most severe disabilities and medical conditions or behavioral needs can live successfully in the community. For each person with complex needs in a large facility, others with the same type of complex needs are living in small community homes. In planning for success, it is important that the transition plan accurately identifies the service needs of the individual such as the required level of supervision, toileting and feeding requirements, mobility requirements, language and nursing needs and the resources required to meet their needs.

Q: My family member has a severe disability. How can I involve him/her in this transition plan?

A: Even family members with severe disabilities can be involved in the transition planning process. The importance of your family member's involvement in the transition process cannot be stressed enough as it is a key factor in the ultimate success of the transition. Your family member should attend transition meetings with you, visit potential residential providers and interact with people living in those residences and with the staff. During that visit, be sure to note your family member's reaction to the home and the people in it. Are they watching the activity at hand and do they appear interested? Do they appear comfortable in the environment? What is their body language? Do they appear relaxed and smiling or tense and frowning? What do they communicate about the visit to you or to others? Your family member's involvement will help ensure that their preferences and desires are identified and included in the decision-making.

Q: How can I be sure my son or daughter is safe during this transition and after the transition has taken place?

A: Remain involved in the care of your family member with a disability. Visit your family member frequently and participate in their individual treatment plan meetings. Ask questions, report concerns and have those questions and concerns answered and addressed by the facility administrator.

Q: When do you need help in the transition process?

A: When you have questions or concerns about the transition process or the choices being offered to you and your family member with a disability. Equip for Equality is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy System and the only statewide, cross-disability comprehensive advocacy organization. We are the official legal advocate for people with disabilities in Illinois. In addition to other programs and activities, we provide self-advocacy assistance which enables people to advocate on their own behalf or on behalf of a family member. When self-advocacy is not enough or is unlikely to prove effective, we provide direct legal representation. We can assist you and your family member with a disability in making sure that your family member's rights in the transition process are protected and that the quality of services to which they are entitled are provided.

For more information regarding the rights of people with disabilities or about Equip for Equality's services, please visit our website at: www.equipforequality.org.



DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION?

Contact Equip for Equality (all services are free of charge)
800.537.2632 (voice) or 800.610.2779 (TTY)
e-mail: contactus@equipforequality.org

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