

Tips for Selecting and Monitoring a Rehabilitation Program

1. You Know Your Needs Best

People with brain injury and their families know themselves and their needs best. Rehabilitation professionals can help provide the information you need to make informed choices, but you have to live with the decisions you make.

2. Be Curious

Ask questions. Learn about the program, its staff and rehabilitation philosophy and methodology. If you do not understand something, insist that someone take the time to explain it in the detail you need. Rehabilitation is as much an "art" as a "science."

3. Learn From Others

When researching available programs, talk with at least three individuals who have participated in each program you are considering. You can benefit from listening to their experiences with the program.

4. Explore More Than One Program

There are hundreds of rehabilitation programs and services to choose from. The closest one, or the one which offers the most services is not necessarily the one that will best meet your needs. Many managed care organizations have established contracts with rehabilitation providers. Options available under such plans may be limited, but still offer more than one program to choose from. It can help to ask about other options and about when the plan makes exceptions to use non-contract providers.

5. Listen To Your Instincts

Make decisions when you are ready. If you are unsure or uncomfortable, find someone who has no stake in the decision to help you sort things out. Be wary of anyone who tries to pressure you. If you feel pressured, report this to the program's corporate office, licensing agencies and accrediting organizations.

6. Get It In Writing

This cannot be emphasized enough! Keep a log of who you spoke to, the date, time and a summary of your conversation. Keep copies of all correspondence. During this emotional time, it is easy to forget information. You may wish to tape record your conversations so you can refer to them later. The person you are speaking with should readily agree to be taped. Get any commitments for services (the types and quantities to be provided as well as costs) in writing before you choose a program.

7. Looks Are Not Everything

The quality of rehabilitation services cannot be judged by how nice the facilities or marketing materials look.

8. The Ultimate Goal is Take Charge

Rehabilitation programs should promote self-determination to the fullest extent possible and maximize integration in the community. Self-determination can be achieved by

taking charge of the decision-making process - for example, deciding how you wish to use your own time, energy and money.

9. Know Your Financial Situation

Talk with the insurance carrier, managed care organization or other health care payer to find out how much it will pay, for what services and under what conditions. Ask about deductibles and co-payments. Get a copy of your policy or plan and re-read it. Find out the extent of your financial obligations. Ask about the long-term implications of decisions you make today. Get regular (at least monthly) updates about where you stand financially with the payer and program. Find out about public or other private benefits you may be eligible for and apply promptly.

10. Be Involved

Distance is no excuse for poor communication. Participate in team meetings. Establish regular verbal and written contact with key people in the program. Voice your opinions, questions and concerns promptly. You should be welcome to visit, observe or participate at any time.

11. The Customer Is Always Right

As a consumer of brain injury rehabilitation services, you are the customer. While someone else may pay the bills, you are the one who must be satisfied with the services provided. If you are not satisfied, work with the program and funding source to remedy the situation promptly. In these difficult times, choosing brain injury rehabilitation programs and services may be the single most important decision you make - emotionally, financially and in terms of outcome. Take the time to make good decisions. Once you are receiving services, stay on top of what is being provided and what other options exist. Be an informed consumer.