



# CAREGIVERS

## CAREGIVERS OF TBI SURVIVORS

You play an important role in the recovery the individual with traumatic brain injury (TBI).

You may be a spouse, parent, sibling, or friend. Your job as a caregiver may include being a:

- Case Manager
- Advocate
- Benefits Coordinator
- Health Care Provider

You are starting out on an important journey in your life — becoming a family caregiver to someone who has a traumatic brain injury (TBI). A caregiver like you can help your survivor recover as fully as possible.

### Some Tips:

- Get to know the members of the health care team and the case managers. They can and will help you during the hospital stay, during recovery, and when the survivor comes home.
- Keep health care information about your survivor in a notebook. Being organized helps you feel less stressed.
- Talk about your needs and the needs of your survivor to others (advocacy).
- Take care of yourself first, so you can take care of your survivor.
- Take time and be honest when helping children and other family members cope with TBI.
- Allow your friends and family to build a support network to help you. Ask for help. No one can do it alone.
- Plan for some time off. Respite care and day care programs are valuable resources to you and your survivor.
- There are ways to balance work and caregiving through Family and Medical Leave and other means.
- There are key legal issues to address to protect your family and your survivor.



## **PLANNING FOR A FAMILY MEMBER WITH TBI**

1. Learn about your family member's challenges by closely involving in the rehabilitation process.
2. Have your family member's room ready. Plan the room arrangement so the individual can function as independently as possible.
3. Establish a schedule that includes as much activity as the individual can tolerate without becoming overly fatigued. This may mean an outpatient therapy, schedule, and a day activity program in the community or even a volunteer "job." Everyone needs a reason to get up in the morning and something satisfying to look forward to.
4. If social problems such as drugs/alcohol were a problem before the injury, they are likely to be a problem afterward. As long as your family member is dependent on the family, then the family is in the best position to prevent this from happening.
5. External cueing is very helpful. Create some strategies for compensating for this problem by developing lists, post-it notes, or cue cards or any other strategies that help the person feel more independent and less likely to make mistakes and be nagged or scolded.
6. Structure and consistency! There's nothing more frustrating and frightening than being an adult and not knowing what you're supposed to be doing. Structuring helps offset some problems by giving the individual a consistent and dependable way of life.
7. Always check with your physician when behavioral changes occur. Seizures can develop after brain injury and it is not uncommon that they occur some months or years after the injury. They are frequently called "silent seizures" because they do not involve convulsions; however, they often create changes in behavior.



Washington State  
Department of Social  
& Health Services

*Transforming lives*

DSHS 22-1712 (6/17)



**Traumatic  
Brain Injury**

*TBI Council of Washington*