



Adults with Disabilities:
**Understanding
Support Services**

Part of an educational series
about long-term care choices in
Broome County.

Action
for **Older**
Persons

Information you can count on.
Assistance you can trust.

This Series of Real Choices Consumer Education Booklets includes the following titles:

- Paying for Long-Term Care: Understanding Your Choices
- Facility & Community Options: Understanding Levels of Long-Term Care
- Help at Home: Choices in Home Health Care & Support Services
- What You Should Know About Staying at Home: Safety, Security, Modifications & Repairs
- When You're the One Providing Care: Understanding Caregiver Support Services
- Advance Health Care Planning: Making Your Wishes Known
- Adults with Disabilities: Understanding Support Services
- Healthy Choices for Living Well

Disability Support Options

More today than ever before, people with disabilities are living full, active lives.

The enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1989, along with the more recent Olmstead decision and New Freedom Initiative, have set the stage for people with disabilities to participate fully in all areas of society by increasing access to assistive and universally designed technologies, expanding educational and employment opportunities, and promoting increased access into daily community life.

This booklet introduces agencies, services and programs that can help you, or someone you care about, overcome obstacles that may be caused by a physical disability. Other booklets in this series that may be helpful are listed on the inside front cover of this booklet.

You may also want to find out about the Independent Living Center (ILC) in your area. An ILC typically is a non-residential, private, non-profit, consumer-controlled, community-based organization that offers services and advocacy by and for persons with all types of disabilities. Its goal is to help persons with

Information & Education

disabilities achieve their maximum potential within the community.

In Broome County, contact:

- Southern Tier Independence Center (STIC)
24 Prospect Avenue
Binghamton, NY 13901
Phone: 607-724-2111
Voice/TTY: 607-772-3600
Email: stic@stic-cil.org
Website: www.stic-cil.org

Community-Based Housing

Finding affordable, accessible housing in a suitable location can be challenging. In Broome County, STIC may be able to help you with your search.

Two additional resources that may ease your search are:

1. The *Broome County Elder Services Guide*. This comprehensive directory of local programs and services includes a "Housing" section that lists options for older and/or disabled adults. Pick up a copy of this free Guide at Action for

Older Persons, 30 W. State St., Binghamton, Broome County Office for Aging, or any local senior center while supplies last. You may also visit the Guide online at:
www.broomeelderservices.org.

2. Broome County Office for Aging's booklet entitled, "Senior Apartment Housing Guide" also lists housing options available locally. To request a copy, call 778-2411.

Most local housing options included in these resources are available to disabled adults of any age. Rent is often based on income, making them a sensible option to consider for renters with lower incomes.

Typically, wheelchair accessible apartments are limited, and most housing has a waiting list. Therefore, if you think you'll need housing within the next few years, now is a good time to explore your options and put your name on a waiting list.

Home Modifications

An ideal, "barrier-free" home has no physical obstructions to limit your mobility. It allows you to move easily to and from all rooms; and lets you turn appliances on/off, get in and out

of the bath and use the toilet with minimal or no help.

If you live in a home that is not barrier-free and/or does not allow you to adapt safely to your physical disability, you may want to consider some remodeling options. Most ILCs have “experts” on staff who can visit your home to assess ways it could be modified to meet your needs.

Locally, STIC is available to provide on-site, one-on-one consultations. They’ll even draw up specifications for the modifications they recommend. And while they don’t have funding to pay for modifications, STIC’s staff can help you explore funding sources.

This help may be especially important if you’re considering a large project like building a handicap accessible ramp which can be very expensive. Sometimes an agency that provides free consultations can cover labor costs if you provide the materials. If you can’t afford the materials, however, you might be able to find another agency, grant, or low-interest loan to help finance the project.

Transportation

Once you've made suitable housing arrangements, finding safe ways to travel to and from your home will become a priority. Medical appointments, grocery shopping, employment, and socialization all require transportation. A variety of choices exist that you'll want to explore.

Private Transportation - Many adults with disabilities drive their own vehicles with the use of adaptive devices and/or vehicle modifications. Hand controls and/or a wheelchair lift can promote total independence in some cases.

If eligible, you can obtain a handicapped parking permit from your city or town clerk's office. This permit allows you to park in designated, handicapped parking spots.

You may also be eligible to apply for disabled license plates for your vehicle. To do so, you'll need to go to the local office of the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles with a doctor's statement or a permit from the clerk's office that states your disability is permanent.

Public & Volunteer Transportation - If driving is not a practical option for you, public transportation and/or local volunteer services may be your solution. You'll find program listings in the *Broome County Elder Services Guide*.

When investigating your choices, consider the following questions:

- ☑ What type of transportation does this particular program provide?
- ☑ What is the service area covered by this service?
- ☑ How much does the service cost?
- ☑ How far in advance must the service be requested?

You'll also want to know these terms:

- **Fixed Route Service** - Refers to a regular, public bus route. All public buses are wheelchair accessible; however, you must be able to get to and from the bus stop yourself. Eligible passengers may request reduced fare passes. If you're over age 65, you may obtain a Senior Bus ID from your local Office for Aging. If you are disabled and live in Broome County, call Broome County Security at 778-2107.

- **Curb to Curb Service** - The driver will pull up in front of your home and wait for you to come to the vehicle; however, he/she will not go to your door or help you on. If you use a wheelchair, the driver will raise and lower the wheel-chair lift and fasten your chair into the vehicle.

- **Door to Door Service** - The driver will go to your door and walk with you, or possibly push you in your wheelchair, to the vehicle. Most often, volunteer organizations provide this service.

- **Ambulette/MediVan** - An emergency, ambulance-like service for people who have no, or very limited, mobility of their own. You may find providers listed in the "Yellow Pages" of the phone book, or by calling Broome County Office for Aging's Senior Resource Line at 778-2411.

If you have Medicaid, your coverage may pay for transportation to and from your medical appointments. First, you'll need to obtain pre-authorization from Medicaid.

Equipment & Technology

Having appropriate equipment at home can be vital to promoting your independence and ease of care.

Equipment - When investigating choices of equipment and related supplies, be sure to consider these options:

- **Durable Medical Equipment Suppliers**- “DME” suppliers sell wheelchairs, walkers, oxygen equipment, hospital beds, and lift chairs. With a doctor’s order, your Medicare or private insurance may pay for some of this equipment. In most cases, insurance will not cover smaller assistive equipment (i.e. walker trays, jar openers, comb extenders).

- **Medical Equipment Loan Closets** – Lend equipment for home use, including electric and/or hospital beds, bed trays, footstools, bedpans, canes, crutches, wheelchairs, walkers, toilet seat raisers, and bathtub seats. Some loan closets give borrowing privileges to members only.

For listings of local Loan Closets and DME suppliers, see the *Broome County Elder Services Guide*.

Technology - Innovative technologies can help compensate for hearing and/or visual impairments.

The tool that most adults who are deaf and some hard of hearing adults use for telephone conversation is TTY (text telephones) or TDD (Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf). These terminals allow two-way text conversation over a telephone line. Other visual technologies, such as Internet chat and messaging, email, e-paging, and faxing are also used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

For visually impaired persons, assistive technologies include voice activated and talking devices, large print texts, other reading aids, and Braille equipment. Computer-aided devices work well for many people who have speech limitations.

The *Broome County Elder Services Guide's* "Health Information & Support" section lists disease specific associations that offer loan closets, limited financial aid, and/or self-help or support groups that can inform you about additional creative solutions. Staff at STIC can also inform you about the types of adaptive equipment and devices that might help you.

Support & Advice

Learning to live with a disability or caring for someone who has a disability, can be challenging, stressful and emotional. That's why it's important to find the right support system to help you build and/or maintain your independence and live a life that is meaningful to you. In addition to family and friends, consider these options:

Peer Support - Having input and support from others who have experienced life with a disability can make the adjustment process significantly easier. There are many sources of support groups including those available through STIC and those listed in the "Health Care & Support" section of the *Broome County Elder Services Guide*.

Advocacy - An advocate can provide you with guidance or assistance to overcome obstacles you may be facing in the community. STIC staff can direct you to the most appropriate agency, or you can find Advocacy listings in the "Disability and Related Services" section of the *Broome County Elder Services Guide*.

Counseling - Support services for adults with emotional or mental health concerns vary by community. In Broome County, STIC

offers professional, psychological counseling for adults with physical disabilities and their families. Other programs are listed in the “Mental Health & Wellness” section of the *Broome County Elder Services Guide*. Or, you may call Broome County Office for Aging’s Senior Resource Line at 778-2411.

Employment

Many adults return to work after adjusting to their physical limitation(s). If you need help paying for pre-employment training, finding a job, or learning how to accommodate your physical limitations while at work, consider contacting one of these agencies:

- VESID (Vocational & Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities)
State Office Building, 7th Floor
44 Hawley St., Binghamton, NY 13901
Phone: 721-8400
- Commission for the Blind & Visually Handicapped
44 Hawley St., Binghamton, NY 13901
Phone: 1-866-871-3000 or 721-8292
Hearing Impaired TDD Calls: 1-866-6000

Both of these agencies offer prevocational assessment and training. If you're eligible, they can provide funding for adaptive equipment or devices to help you achieve your educational or vocational goals. They may also refer you to another agency, such as STIC, for additional help with your job search and placement.

If you have Medicaid, or plan to apply for this coverage, you should be aware of a non-traditional Medicaid program available to working adults with disabilities, called the **Medicaid Buy-In Program**.

To be eligible for this program, your disability must fit the definition used by the Social Security Administration. Through this program, you may retain a higher income and more financial resources than allowed under traditional Medicaid.

To determine your eligibility and/or to apply for the Medicaid Buy-In Program, contact:

- Department of Social Services
Broome County
36-42 Main St., Binghamton, NY 13905
Phone: 778-2604

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Disabled and older adults have more care options than ever before. While having many choices is important, the long-term care system may seem complicated or overwhelming at times. That's why CARE volunteers are here to offer free guidance and support to help you meet your needs.

CARE Volunteers can help!

Community

Advocacy

Referral

Empowerment

Call today to have a CARE Volunteer help make the long-term care system work for you.

607-722-1251



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All information herein is accurate as of March 2005. However changes in agencies and services occur frequently. For the most current information, the reader is encouraged to directly contact agencies, the Broome County Office for Aging at (607)778-2411 or the Broome County Online Elder Services Guide at: www.broomeelderservices.org.

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