

# Going Home - The Hospital Discharge Plan

Thousands of patients are discharged from Canadian acute-care hospitals every day. While some are transferred to other facilities for further care, most patients go home to continue with their recovery.

*But they are handed back to loving families who often have no idea what to expect next – who face the future with anxiety and uncertainty.*

Fortunately, things are changing. More and more hospitals are starting to welcome families into the circle of care, encouraging them out of waiting rooms and into a full appreciation of their loved one's clinical needs – in the hospital and beyond it. *The best hospital discharge plans now seriously take into account the proven beneficial role families can play in patient recovery, throughout the hospital stay and in follow-up care at home.*

This is a good idea in theory, but most families with a hospitalized loved one must cope with a steep learning curve, because few hospitals have the time and resources to educate them. Hospitals remain unfamiliar places populated by kind strangers who perform clinical tests and procedures that remain a mystery to intimidated families who are reluctant to ask what they mean. There is growing evidence that informed and involved family caregivers can have a direct and positive impact on patient outcomes. Studies have confirmed that family caregivers who are encouraged to watch and learn (and even participate in care) during the hospital stay are equipped with vital knowledge and skills that not only ease the potentially-unsettling discharge process but also add supportive value to follow-up professional home care.

*When a care-model that includes loved ones is fully realized, a shared goal of complete patient recovery is in place.*

# ***Discharge Planning Guide***



Courtesy of Brian Carlo - President of ReliAble Independent Living Services® (Halton)

***“At the earliest opportunity, you and your health care team will begin planning for your hospital/rehab discharge. It would be my privilege to help you and your families navigate the system and act as a resource in order to help you make informed decisions.”***

In Ontario, before it is time for a patient to be released following a hospital stay it is important potential caregivers **meet with the social worker and Community Care Access Centre discharge planner** on the patient's ward. This should be done as early as possible so you can start putting into place the plans you will need to follow when the patient gets home.

**Request a team conference/discharge planning meeting when you learn that discharge from the hospital will be scheduled soon.** Find out the home services that are available from the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) in your community. Ask for a meeting with the hospital's CCAC discharge plan facilitator (If you are having trouble finding this person ask to speak to a social worker).

The discharge plan facilitator will answer your questions about what government home care services will be provided. Afterwards, you will be able to make an informed decision as to what additional private services you may require in order to ensure the discharge is successful and that your care recipient does not have to return to hospital.

Many families request that a CCAC qualified Registered Nurse Case Manager attend the discharge planning meeting, as well, to help you to understand what should be available and what is being offered.

***Private services that you may want or need to consider are:***

- additional personal care by a Nurse or Personal Support Worker (PSW)
- home modifications and safety product installations
- in home physiotherapy
- in home occupational therapy
- in home nutritionist
- in home massage therapy

Many private services, such as Bayshore Home Health & ReliAble Independent Living Services, are available in the community. Your discharge planning team can inform you of the services you might wish to consult.

***Inform your health care team of any special needs you may have when you go home.***

(e.g. Community Care Access Centre, Victorian Order of Nurses, travel grant, previous services, visiting nurse, physiotherapy, home oxygen etc.)

- Any prescriptions and follow-up appointments should be given on the day of your discharge.
- Arrange transportation home on the date and time of discharge. If you are unable to get a ride, ask the nursing staff for the Ambulance & Non-Ambulance Medical Transports brochure to review options for transportation. You may have to pay for the transportation.

If you need more care, your health care team will work together with you and community partners to plan for an appropriate discharge. This will ensure that your health care needs can be met when you leave the hospital. Some patients require short term or continuous care after discharge. For those patients there are several options they and their health care team will consider, including transfers to:

1. an assisted living accommodation or retirement home;
2. a long-term care home; or
3. a complex continuing care or rehabilitation facility

If you require long term care placement from hospital, you with the assistance of your health care team should apply to one preferred facility for permanent residence and two facilities which have short waiting lists where you can wait on a temporary basis for your preferred choice.

**For more information a Social Worker is available to discuss your options.**

All Ontario hospitals must promptly discharge patients who no longer require their care. When the patient is deemed ready for discharge, the patient shall be required to leave. This ensures that medical services and beds are available for those in greatest need of acute care. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has specified that when a discharged patient refuses to leave a hospital, the hospital stay becomes uninsured. The hospital will then charge the patient a per diem rate.

### ***Most patients return home when they are discharged.***

#### ***Reasons to Modify the Home***

People renovate their homes for many reasons. One of the major reasons, especially in later life, is to maintain personal independence and quality of life. Our increased longevity, the policy of returning people to the community who were previously institutionalized, and the expected needs of the aging population have spawned increased interest in home modifications consistent with safety, comfort and ease of ability enhancements.

We now routinely see sections of stores given over to products that will allow people with physical limitations to perform the activities of daily living and thus stay in their own homes happier and longer. There are new developments in the 'aging in place' mandate, i.e., our attempts to remain in our own homes even as our physical limitations become more complex. Hundreds of universities, organizations, and companies now have specialized engineering departments dedicated to 'assistive technologies'. Assistive devices and technologies are growing exponentially.

Terms such as 'sheltered', 'assisted', or 'barrier free' housing is incorporated under 'universal design'. In this type of housing we find easy access bathtubs and showers, safety grab bars in bathrooms, safety devices on kitchen appliances, ramps at entrances, wider doorways for walkers and wheelchairs, etc.

A care recipient being discharged from the hospital often requires specialized equipment to enter and exit the house, and move around without constantly requiring aid. Porch lifts, Stair Glides and other specialized equipment can assist.

***An assessment of the features that can be incorporated into the home to facilitate safety and comfort, promote independent living and enable care-givers to assist with tasks easier; performed by a Qualified Barrier Free Modification Specialist, should be part of the overall plan.***

Specialized Health-Care Home Modification Contractors often work with Occupational Therapists and other Healthcare professionals towards a comprehensive written assessment.



## ***The Occupational Therapist's Role in Home Modification***

Occupational Therapists or OTs, as they are known is a profession, are concerned with promoting health and well-being through occupation, (which is everything that people will do during the course of everyday life).

Each activity that one participates in each day occurs in an environment. This environment either facilitates or creates barriers to the individual accomplishing a task, and the individual needs to have a set of skills in order to accomplish the activity. An OT will work with a person to either improve the skills needed to complete an activity or will modify the environment to allow a person to complete the task.

For example, a senior has had a stroke leaving them unable to use their dominant hand to grab hold of objects. The OT will do treatment to rehabilitate their hand function and suggest adaptations for the bathroom so the individual can exit and enter the shower safely. It is the ability of the OT to predict how the environment will hinder or facilitate the function in a specific individual which makes them an important consultant in home modification.

An OT will assess both the individual's ability to complete the task and the environment's capacity to support the individual. The environment is not only the physical building; it is the cultural, institutional, and social forces affecting the individual's ability to participate in the activity.

### ***Some thoughts and questions to review with your OT:***

- Consult with a contractor who specializes in Health Care Home Modifications and have your OT interface with them and you from the outset; building codes and those un-familiar with available products, requirements and situations do not always recognize difficult accessibility issues surrounding modifying for those with special needs.
- Remember that safety for your loved one is paramount.
- Think creatively –sometimes the best solution is not something you have had previous personal experience with.

For further information about Occupational Therapists contact the Canadian Occupational Therapists Association or your provincial OT Association. Visit the Resources section of this website for listings in your province.



## Halton Community

### “Helping You Stay in the Home You Love”

Reliable Independent Living Services<sup>®</sup>, design and install barrier-free living spaces. We have the experience and resources needed in order to transform any home or business into a comfortable, barrier-free environment.

Our wide selection of products and services are customized to suit the style and décor that our clients desire, combined with the most practical and safe 'Universal Design' options available. We design for ease of living, comfort and safety for people of all abilities.

Our passion for improving the quality of life is what drives us to help people achieve independent living. By bringing barrier free living into the comfort of home, it keeps families together and by removing physical barriers it allows people to live and work to the best of their ability, minimizing the need for assistance.

By making accessible improvements, it becomes easier to provide quality care when needed.

Trust, reliability, and expertise in designing and installing barrier-free and elder-care environments is what makes Reliable Independent Living Services<sup>®</sup> a premier Specialized Health-Care / Elder-Care Home Modification contractor.

## Some of the Assistive Devices, Technologies, Methods and Solutions We Can Offer:



### Bath Tub Modification Kits:

Bathtub Door Insert Kits offer a cost effective way to allow the bathtub to remain functioning as either a bath or shower while providing much easier access.

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



### Accessible Shower & Full Bathroom Modifications:

Attention to detail in design to optimize access and mobility as well as function-ability in using bathroom accessories



**Foot Flush** when balance is compromised

***We maintain a consistently high level of professional care and responsibility in each project. We guarantee all of our work as we know our clients would expect nothing less than "Integrity through Expertise". Your project is our project.***

## ***Therapeutic Bathtubs***



***“With a low entry step and outward swing door, the space-saving size of the SanSpa uses less water than many walk in bathtubs on the market. It has set the standard for accessibility in bathing.*”**

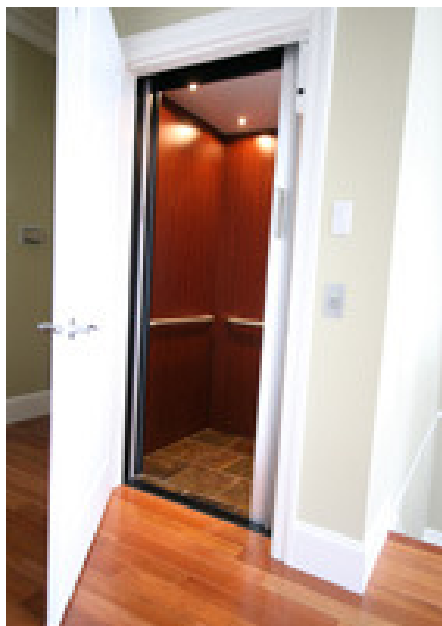
***“Our greatest concern regarding residential design issues is to make the finished result safe, functional and a non-institutional / aesthetically pleasing environment that can actually add to property marketability and value”.***



**Porch Lift**



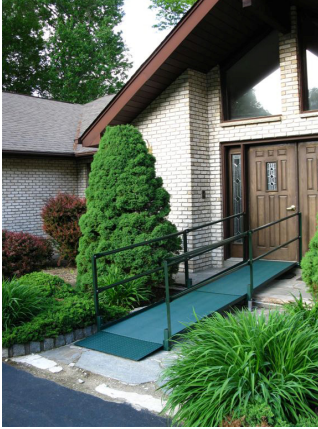
**Stair Glide**



**Elevator**

**ReliAble Independent Living Services is an authorized agent and dealer for lift equipment manufacturers. Providing preparation and infrastructure for elevator, porch lifts & stair glide installations.**

## Wheelchair Ramps



When a wheelchair ramp is part of the accessibility plan to the home, there are several things to take into account: If the person using the ramp uses an electric wheelchair, it can be built slightly steeper than the recommended 12 inches of run to one inch of rise. The ramp needs the most gradual slope when it is used by someone who moves their wheelchair by pushing backwards with their feet. If you need a turn because of space restrictions or location, the actual turn must be a flat platform – you should not turn on a slope as it increases the level of difficulty and is riskier in inclement weather.

When deciding on a ramp style, consider the location (front of house, side or back) and the height. For ramps that enter at the front of the house, more care should be given to integrate the ramp with the landscape to reduce any sense of ‘institutionalizing’ your home for yourself and your neighbours. You are not trying to “hide” the ramp but your house frontage should say something positive about the people who live in the home. Rather than the ramp defining the people (“the wheelchair house” down the road) the ramp, when well-constructed and thoughtfully landscaped just adds a bit of information about someone that uses a wheelchair.

The use of Pisa stone retaining walls and an interlocking stone ramp surface provides the most appealing look for the front of a home. These can often be built so that the ramp, itself, is invisible and what has been built looks more like landscaping improvements. The higher the rise, the more expensive this style of ramp becomes. A rise of 40 inches can be completed for about \$4,500 to \$5,500.

Gardens and plants can be incorporated to minimize the visual effect of the ramp. Flower beds or shrubs and trees can be incorporated at turns in the ramp. Ramps can be built out of various materials. Building permits are usually not required for this kind of ramp.

Elevated ramps are most often made with a framework of pressure-treated pine or spruce supported by concrete poured into concrete sonotubes that go below the frost line. Surface materials for elevated ramps include deck boards made of pressure-treated pine, cedar, recycled materials, and synthetic materials.

## ***Ramps: Things to Consider***

1. Materials: Synthetic materials are the most expensive, however, they last longer, do not require any maintenance (including painting or staining), do not splinter, and can be purchased with a non-slip patterned surface. The color is consistent throughout the material, scratches and bumps are less visible.

Recycled materials have the same advantages as synthetic deck boards but do not have non-slip patterned surfaces. They are less expensive. You can create your own non-slip surface by using paints with sand already mixed in or mix a special sand available at building supply stores with the stain or protector yourself to improve traction. You can also add wooden slats (“speed bumps”) to improve traction. An important and helpful feature of both synthetic and recycled material deck boards is that due to their non-absorbent nature they do not absorb moisture during the warmth of the day and frost over during colder nights.

Cedar, although very attractive, requires a lot of maintenance and does not stand up well to high traffic. You will need to recoat the high traffic areas twice a year to avoid moisture getting into the wood and turning it black. Cedar is slippery when wet.

Pressure treated spruce or pine is the least expensive alternative and most readily available. The ramp requires minimal maintenance. It does crack and splinter and has a tendency to frost over due to the absorption of moisture. You can use sand to provide a bit of traction on a slippery ramp or mix special sand in with your paint or stain. Keep in mind that a slippery ramp is more dangerous for someone walking down the ramp than someone using a wheelchair.

Pressure treated and cedar ramps, because they are more economical and almost impossible to blend in naturally with the home or landscaping, are more suitable for side or rear entrances. Synthetic or stone ramps can be coloured to blend in more naturally.

2. Location: An ideal place for a ramp is in the garage. Given our weather patterns, a ramp in the dry area of a garage can be very wise. You lose a parking spot but you will not need to shovel the ramp clear of snow, put sand on a slippery ramp, or worry about rain. You can wait at the bottom of the ramp until your ride arrives without having to worry about the weather. You can also use a remote garage door opener to provide easy access to the garage. Where the ramp is elevated off the ground, most municipalities require a permit. This will usually depend on how high the ramp is off the ground. Ramps should have a minimum width of their rolling surface of 36 inches.

Building codes will determine whether rails are required based on the height of the ramp.

Even if rails are not required the ramp should have a 4-inch curb on each side of the rolling surface to prevent the chair from slipping off.



## Halton Community

### Our Pledge:

**“Helping you stay in the home you love!”**

On behalf of ReliAble Independent Living Services®, I welcome you as a valued member of the Halton community and wish you every success in your return back home.

At ReliAble Independent Living Services® we believe that each new client contributes directly to the growth and success of our vision. We take great pride in building relationships and offering a client centered approach with respect and sensitivity towards meeting individual needs.

I sincerely hope this guide provides you with confidence in understanding the many options and supports available within the home health care community.

Again, welcome!



Ronny Wiskin  
Founder of Independent Living Services®