



# Shared Living Program Questions and Answers for Families

Dear Family Member,

Since 1996 HMEA has provided an individualized option in residential living for the people we support — it's called **Shared Living**. We have had many inquiries about this support, and of course, we have had a lot of questions. In an effort to answer some of the more frequently asked questions we have put together this question and answer page, which we hope will help those interested in learning more about Shared Living.

Shared Living opens many doors, and provides a lot of benefit to many people — it could be right for you! As our tag line suggests...HMEA is finding ways to help people **"REACH OUT FOR INDEPENDENCE."** If you have questions or would like more information please contact David Placido at 508.298.1134 or email him at [dplacido@hmea.org](mailto:dplacido@hmea.org).

## Questions and Answers

### **Q. What is Shared Living?**

**A.** Shared Living is a residential program that matches a person with a developmental disability to a Shared Living Provider. The supported person typically lives in the home of the Shared Living Provider, although in some situations they may secure housing jointly. Shared Living Providers may be families, couples or individuals. The match is the key to the success of Shared Living. Providers offer needed support to the person placed in their home and in return they receive a stipend, as well as mutual companionship.

### **Q. Who is a Shared Living Provider?**

**A.** A Shared Living Provider is a person who shares his/her home with an individual who needs support. The Provider is thought of as a companion who has special talents in teaching, mentoring and assisting an individual to reach their life's goals. This Provider helps the individual to remain healthy and safe, connect with their community, develop and maintain relationships and manage his/ her financial affairs.

### **Q. How is a match made?**

**A.** Finding the right match is the key to a successful Shared Living arrangement. Therefore, there are many steps taken to ensure an appropriate match is made. First, there is the interview process where the potential Shared Living Provider will be asked about their motivation, family dynamics, interests, hobbies, likes and dislikes, community memberships etc. Next, a home assessment is completed to make sure the home meets the standards set by HMEA and the Department of Disability Services (DDS). All of this information is used to determine the appropriate match. If there seems to be a good match, the potential provider is introduced to the individual's team (i.e., family/guardian, DDS Service Coordinator, HMEA support personnel etc.). In order for there to be a successful and smooth transition into Shared Living, the family member/guardian must accept or approve the potential provider. Finally, the people who may be living together need to spend time together getting to know each other. This is done through visits to each other's homes and community activities, and should include overnight visits.

### **Q. Will someone from HMEA visit my family member's home?**

**A.** Yes. After the person moves into the home, an HMEA Placement Coordinator will visit the home at least once a month. There will be more frequent visits to the home during the initial transition. The Placement Coordinator makes certain that the home is clean and safe, that the individual is happy with the arrangement, and makes sure that the Shared Living Provider has everything they need to support the individual effectively.

**Q. When someone is placed in a Shared Living arrangement do the supports traditionally provided by HMEA cease?**

A. No. Individuals placed in our Shared Living program continue to receive the same supports they currently receive. A Placement Coordinator, who will consult with our clinical and medical departments as needed, monitors all supports. The Placement Coordinator will work closely with the Shared Living Provider to make certain the individual supported receives all the community he/she is entitled to.

**Q. How long does the placement process usually take?**

A. The process is very individualized and can take several months once a person and/or their family decide to pursue Shared Living. Finding the best possible match, with respect to a provider, is paramount and recruitment and selection can take some time.

**Q. How will HMEA ensure that my family member will be protected in this living arrangement?**

A. In order to become a Shared Living Provider ALL potential providers are thoroughly screened by HMEA. A CORI (Crime Records Check) is conducted and references are thoroughly investigated. HMEA keeps all lines of communication open with all the people involved in the person's life, including employment services, doctors, the DDS etc. In addition, the DDS will also visit the person's home from time-to-time.

**Q. How long does a placement usually last?**

A. HMEA seeks a commitment of at least three years from any potential Shared Living Provider. It is our intent that each placement will last as long as all parties are satisfied with the arrangement. HMEA currently supports individuals in placements that have lasted five years and longer. When a placement is working well, the individual and provider mutually benefit from the shared living arrangement.

**Q. What happens if this arrangement doesn't work out?**

A. If, for whatever reason, a Shared Living arrangement doesn't work out HMEA will continue to provide the highest quality of residential supports for the person. We will strive to assist him or her through the transition with as little disruption to their life as possible. They will not lose their funding. HMEA will assist the person, as well as their family, to identify how they would like to live and then help them attain that style of living.

**Q. Will my family member be as active in their community in a Shared Living arrangement as they have been in a Group Living arrangement?**

A. HMEA has found that when someone is living in a Shared Living environment, community memberships and relationships flourish as a natural result of living with a family or in a family situation instead of a group setting. This may be due to the person's increased ability to access their community more easily, because the access is not as contingent on staffing schedules and the needs of others requiring support.

**Q. How will I receive information about my family member?**

A. You will be able to communicate directly with the Shared Living Provider. Most families have found that it is helpful to be able to communicate with one person who has a direct knowledge of their family member's well being. You are encouraged to visit the home and talk as often as necessary. You will also communicate with the HMEA Placement Coordinator responsible for monitoring your family member's placement. In most circumstances, families find it easier to be involve in a person's life when they live with a Shared Living Provider.