



# Shared Living Program Questions and Answers for Providers

Dear Potential Provider,

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.

Whether it's the person receiving supports who is looking to change his/her living arrangements, a provider willing to open their home to someone to help promote a more independent life-style, or a family member wanting to ensure continued comfort and caring for their loved one, Shared Living may just be the answer.

The Shared Living Provider is a person who shares his/her home with an individual requiring support, and with whom the individual shares his/her daily plans, activities, and fellowship. The Provider is thought of as a supportive roommate and companion, who has special talents in teaching, championing the individual's welfare, mentoring and assisting him/her to reach their life's goals. The Provider helps the individual stay healthy and fit, remain safe, deal with disappointments, make plans, take vacations, make and keep friends, and manage his/her financial affairs.

## 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. Do I need to have previous experience?**

**A.** Requirements vary from individual-to-individual. However, most of the time it is preferable, but not required that you have had some experience, either personal or professional, with people who need support. HMEA will provide extensive orientation for any person who is considering Shared Living.

### **Q. What training will I receive?**

**A.** Shared Living Providers are required to obtain First Aid and CPR certification and to keep those certifications current. Completion of HMEA's Shared Living Orientation and participation in quarterly Shared Living Provider forums are also mandatory. Additional training, specific to the individual being supported will also be provided. Shared Living Providers are encouraged to take advantage of the many trainings offered through HMEA's Professional Development program.

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# Questions and Answers

## **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 Developmental Services (DDS). Once completed, this information is used to determine who may be an appropriate match. The third step is an introduction to the individual and their team (i.e. Family/Guardian, DDS Service Coordinator, HMEA support personnel etc.). Finally, spending time with the person and getting to know them. This is done through visits to each others homes and community activities, and should include overnight visits.

## **Q. How do I receive compensation?**

**A.** Providers receive a monthly stipend on or about the first of every month. Stipends are developed based on the needs of the person being supported. Providers should expect to support the individual's basic needs, such as food and shelter from the stipend. Also included in the stipend are funds to be used to pay for respite services.

## **Q. Can I work another job?**

**A.** Yes, there are many providers who have a job in addition to Shared Living. However, being a Shared Living Provider is a 24 hour a day responsibility and you must be able to provide the necessary supports to the person living with you. This includes transportation to and from work, attending appointments as needed and being available in the event of illness or emergency. It is OK to have another person help with the situations, as long as the necessary supports are being provided to the person living with you.

## **Q. How do I get help if I need it?**

**A.** When you need advice or assistance, the first person to call is the HMEA Placement Coordinator. They may help solve problems, answer questions about paperwork, and assist in making your role as the provider more effective and manageable.

In the event of an emergency during the evening or weekend, there is an emergency pager carried by someone within the Shared Living department to assist Providers.

## **Q. What type of documentation will I be responsible for?**

**A.** The provider is responsible for all Individual Supports Plans (ISP) related documentation, as well as documentation required by HMEA and DDS. HMEA provides the necessary training and support to complete this paperwork

## **Q. Would I be required to provide transportation?**

**A.** Yes, transportation to and from the person's job, as well as other destinations, are part of the responsibility of the provider. There is no mileage compensation.

## **Q. Would someone visit my home?**

**A.** Yes, before the person moves in, a home study and assessment are conducted to ensure the environment is safe and conducive to the individual needs of the person. After the person moves into the home an HMEA representative would visit at least once a month to provide updates and any needed supports.

## Here is some specific information about Shared Living...

- Assisting the individual served in achieving their personal goals and in adapting a normalized lifestyle.
- Assuring that individuals are provided with opportunities to exercise their rights and are treated with respect and dignity at all times.
- Carrying out informal teaching in order to involve the supported individual in every aspect of their day and improve their social skills.
- Assisting the individual as needed with all activities of daily living.
- Arranging for routine and emergency medical care.
- Participating in monthly meetings with the Placement Coordinator and attending quarterly Provider forums.
- Maintaining a working professional relationship with the individual's family and/or guardian, DDS Service Coordinator, and day or work program.

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.”**

To apply online please click [here](#)...For more information please call Susan Colwell at 508.298.1142 or email her at [scolwell@hmea.org](mailto:scolwell@hmea.org)