

## TIPS ON CHOOSING HOME CARE SERVICES

Community-based care programs, such as home care, help people to maintain independent lifestyles in their own homes for as long as possible. Home care offers professional support services like nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work and rehabilitation, and personal support services like homemaking and care-giving practices, including assistance with meal preparation and bathing.

To access home care services, start by contacting your local Regional Health Authority (RHA) – see page XX for contact information. RHAs are responsible for determining an individual's need for home care and arranging for the delivery of the services deemed appropriate.

Admission to the continuing care system in Alberta, which includes Home Care, is based on a functional assessment of the individual's need. RHAs act as a single point of entry, intended to provide a single point of access to individuals seeking facility or community-based long-term care. Its purpose is to ensure that all possible community options are explored before facility-based care is considered.

Referrals for home care come from many sources including family members, friends, doctors and the person themselves. Once the referral is made, the RHA's home care nurse meets with the individual, usually in his/her own home. The health professional discusses the individual's strengths and needs, and the needs of the individual's informal support system. On the basis of assessed need, including the need for respite to relieve informal caregivers, a service plan is created for eligible individuals identifying the professional and support services required.

Under the home care program, persons are eligible for professional services, funded by the government, to a maximum cost of \$3,000 per month. If not eligible for funded home care, or should additional professional services beyond those provided through the RHA be desired, services can be contracted privately by contacting home care service providers directly.

Here are some questions to ask when speaking to a provider of interest:

- What services are offered? Will these services meet all of the individual's needs now and over time? (You can also find details of services offered by providers at [TheCareGuide.com](http://TheCareGuide.com))
- What costs, if any, are associated with the services offered? Are any subsidies available?
- When are the services available – weekdays or weekends, morning, afternoon or evening?
- What are the hours of operation? Is someone available to answer questions or respond to a crisis?
- How often are the needs of the individual assessed and their care plan evaluated?
- Will the same person be providing services? What qualifications does the person have? What happens if the person providing the services becomes unavailable?
- Is the provider a member of any industry associations or organizations that strive to ensure its members provide quality services?
- Is the provider bondable?

It's also a good idea to visit the offices of the service provider – is the office professional in appearance, clean and well organized? You can tell a great deal about a provider by the condition of their premises. Also, ask for client references so you can contact them to ask about their level of satisfaction with the provider.

Source: The Care Guide ([www.thecareguide.com](http://www.thecareguide.com))