Opportunity for Survivors of Brain Injury to Move into the Community; Open Enrollment for ABI Waivers Set for May 1-21

Do you know someone with a brain injury living in a nursing facility, chronic care or rehabilitation hospital, who wants to live in the community? Survivors of brain injuries including those caused by strokes, car crashes, falls, tumors and more, may be eligible for a unique opportunity.

Two waivers are being offered. The ABI Non-Residential Habilitation (ABI-N) Waiver provides community supports to individuals who move to their own home, apartment, or residence of another person and do not require 24 hour services.

“Being in my own apartment – living independently with great support – has brought me and my family great relief,” says Joanne Susi, who, after suffering a stroke in 2008, lived in a nursing home for three “long” years. In March, 2011, she moved into her own apartment in Walpole as a result of the ABI-N Waiver. “It’s the difference between surviving and thriving.” Prior to her stroke, Susi lived in North Attleboro.

The second waiver, ABI-Residential Habilitation (ABI-RH), provides supervision and staffing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, through a qualified residential provider agency.

“I'm very happy with the way the group home has worked out,” says Cathy Hutchinson, who, after living in a nursing home for more than a decade, lives in a group home in East Taunton with four other women. “This is a dream come true. I am so happy.”

The waiver programs include supports/services for a successful transition and, once in the community, may include services such as day programs, rehabilitation therapies, and home maker services, just to name a few.

“Fill out an application, let your loved one be evaluated” says Carol Maxwell, mother of Raymond Gould, who at the age of 27 suffered a sinus infection that caused a brain injury and lived in a nursing home for 16 months. As a result of the ABI-N Waiver, Raymond now lives in the community with a foster family in Douglas, MA and volunteers at a local hospital. “Every day Raymond is progressing and getting better; he has beaten so many odds…”
To help survivors, families, and professionals understand the process and benefits of applying for these waivers, the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) is holding a series of informational sessions in six locations across the state – Cambridge, Framingham, Brockton, Peabody, Worcester and Springfield. Survivors of brain injury and family members who have participated in the program will be at the sessions to answer questions. Representatives from UMass and BIA-MA will also be there to explain the process and answer questions.

Anyone interested in the program is welcome to attend. For more information, call BIA-MA at 800-242-0030, e-mail abiwaiver@biama.org, or visit www.biama.org.

**The next open enrollment period to apply for the ABI Waivers is May 1-May 21.**

The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA), a private, non-profit organization, provides support to brain injury survivors and their families, offers programs to prevent brain injuries, educates the public on the risks and consequences of brain injury, and advocates for legislation and services.