

## HOW TO FIND RESOURCES IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITY

There are many local organizations throughout the country that offer a variety of practical and support services to people with cancer. However, people often don't know about these services or are unable to find them. National cancer organizations can assist you in finding these resources, and there are a number of things you can do for yourself.

Whether you are looking for a support group, counseling, advice, financial assistance, transportation to and from medical appointments, or information about cancer, most neighborhood organizations, local health care providers, or area hospitals are a good place to start. Often, the hardest part of looking for help is knowing the right questions to ask. The following describes some of these services and how to find them.

### COUNSELING

While some people are reluctant to seek counseling, studies show that having someone to talk to reduces stress and helps people both mentally and physically. Types of counseling include individual, group, family, self-help (sometimes called peer counseling), bereavement, patient-to-patient, and sexuality.

### MEDICAL TREATMENT DECISIONS

Many organizations provide hospital and physician referrals for second opinions and information on clinical trials (research studies with people), which may expand treatment options.

### PREVENTION

While cancer prevention may never be 100 percent effective, many things (such as quitting smoking and eating healthy foods) can greatly reduce a person's risk for developing cancer. Prevention services usually focus on smoking cessation, nutrition, and physical activity.

### REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation services help people adjust to the effects of cancer and its treatment. Occupational or vocational therapy helps people readjust to everyday routines, get back to work, or find employment.

### ADVOCACY

Advocacy is a general term that refers to promoting or protecting the rights and interests of a certain group. Advocacy groups may offer services to assist with legal, ethical, medical, employment, legislative, or insurance issues, among others.

## FINANCIAL

Having cancer can be a tremendous financial burden to cancer patients and their families. There are programs sponsored by the Government and nonprofit organizations to help cancer patients with problems related to medical billing, insurance coverage, and reimbursement issues. There are also sources for financial assistance, and ways to get help collecting entitlements from Medicaid, Medicare, and the Social Security Administration.

## HOW TO FIND THESE SERVICES

Often, the services are right in your own neighborhood or city. The following is a list of places where you can begin your search.

- The hospital, clinic, or medical center where you see your doctor, received your diagnosis, or where you underwent treatment should be able to give you information.
- Most hospitals also have a social work, home care, or discharge planning department. This department may be able to help you find a support group, a nonprofit agency that helps people who have cancer, or the government agencies that oversee Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.
- The public library is an excellent source of information, as is the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center's Patient Education Center (615-322-9799). Visit the Resource Center Monday through Friday, 7:30 am – 5:00 pm, on the first floor of The Vanderbilt Clinic. TVC Room 1900LA.
- Local or county government agencies may offer low-cost transportation (sometimes called para-transit) to individuals unable to use public transportation. Most states also have an Area Agency on Aging that offers low-cost services to people over 60. Your hospital or community social worker can direct you to government agencies for entitlements, including Social Security, state disability, Medicaid (TennCare), income maintenance, and food stamps. (Keep in mind that most applications to entitlement programs take some time to process.) The Federal government also runs the Hill-Burton program (1-800-638-0742), which funds certain medical facilities and hospitals to provide cancer patients with free or low-cost care if they are in financial need.

## GETTING THE MOST FROM A SERVICE: WHAT TO ASK

No matter what type of help you are looking for, the only way to find resources to fit your needs is to ask the right questions. When you are calling an organization for information, it is important to think about what questions you are going to ask before you call. Many people find it helpful to write out their questions in advance, and to take notes during the call. Another good tip is to ask the name of the person with whom you are speaking in case you have follow-up questions.

Below are some of the questions you may want to consider:

- How do I apply for this service?
- Are there eligibility requirements? What are they?
- Is there an application process? How long will it take? What information will I need to complete the application process? Will I need anything else to get the service?
- Do you have any other suggestions about where I can find help?

The most important thing to remember is that you will rarely receive help unless you ask for it. In fact, asking can be the hardest part of getting help. Don't be afraid or ashamed to ask for assistance. Cancer is a very difficult disease, but there are people and services that can ease your burdens.

This fact sheet was adapted with permission from Cancer Care, Inc., a nonprofit social service agency whose mission is to help people with cancer and their families. Cancer Care's toll-free telephone number is 1-800-813-HOPE. The National Cancer Institute and Cancer Care, Inc., are in partnership to increase awareness of the psychosocial issues faced by cancer patients and to provide resources to cancer patients and their families.

For more help, contact:

NCI's Cancer Information Service  
Telephone (toll-free): 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)  
TTY (toll-free): 1-800-332-8615  
LiveHelp® online chat: <https://cissecure.nci.nih.gov/livehelp/welcome.asp>

NCI Fact Sheet 2.10, How to Find Resources in Your Own Community if You Have Cancer  
([www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov))