

# Life Sharing Handbook



A Guide for People Interested in Life Sharing

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## Welcome!

Congratulations on your decision to share your life and home with a family or roommate through Life Sharing. The decision you have made today will lead you down a path of tomorrows filled with love, learning, fulfillment... and no doubt a few tears and laughs. The Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion (BACI) looks forward to supporting you on your journey. We hope you have the time of your life!

We hope this handbook sparks a conversation with you that will last for years to come. Please take a moment to read through the materials. If you have any questions or comments, we would love to meet up and have a chat.

In 1956, parents of children with disabilities formed a non-profit organization in Burnaby to help advocate for the rights of their sons and daughters. This was the birth of the Burnaby Association of Community Inclusion and the beginning of an unwavering commitment to respond to the needs expressed by people we support and their families.

From its start as a grass roots organization, our Association has maintained a steadfast commitment to listening to the needs of people and their families. Our services must honour this group above all, and be capable of accommodating its diverse needs, interests and expectations. This obligation results from a number of considerations, but primarily from the fact that our services bear directly and profoundly on the quality of life of those receiving them.

We are committed to being a dynamic and vibrant organization with strong membership – always driven by, and answerable to, the people and their families we serve.

This Handbook is yours to keep. It is something that you can share with your family, your friends, and your support network to help you understand what Life Sharing is and what to expect from BACI.

If you need more information or have questions, please contact one of BACI's Life Sharing Managers at 604-299-7851. We are always happy to talk to you more about Life Sharing at any time.



## What is Life Sharing?

Life Sharing is a flexible residential option where a person with disabilities and a contractor commit to living together. It involves the person supported, their family, BACI and the contractor being in a relationship with each other and working together to support the arrangement.

Each of the members has a role to play in the relationship, and each brings their own set of hopes, dreams, and expectations. While every Life Sharing relationship is unique, there are some hopes and expectations that are common, such as the hope of a good life lived with purpose and the expectation to be treated and supported with respect.

We believe that through developing strong, trusting relationships and sharing time together can help you build a rich life where you can grow and learn about things that are important to you. The person or people you live with can also help you find ways to participate in your community.

What is so special about Life Sharing is that you choose who you live with. It is our job to listen to you, learn about what you want, need and like, and then help you find a home that will provide the kind of life you want to live. If you wish support from your family or friends to help you make choices about a life sharing home, we welcome their input.

BACI's Life Sharing Managers will help you find a good match and provide you and the person/family that you live with, with ongoing support. You are able to contact the Life Sharing Managers when you need them.



## How to Access Life Sharing Services

Any person who meets Community Living British Columbia's (CLBC's) eligibility criteria may apply for Life Sharing services provided by BACI. Your acceptance to services is based on:

- Confirmation from the Senior Manager of LSN based on BACI's capacity
- Finding a suitable home that you feel will work for you
- The service being a good fit for your needs
- Funding support



## How is Life Sharing paid for?

BACI receives money from Community Living BC (CLBC) to manage Life Sharing. BACI will get a referral from CLBC to start the process when people want or need a place to live and are interested in Life Sharing. CLBC pays BACI to provide oversight of the arrangement.

As a person with a disability, you are eligible to receive financial support for your community housing. You will be expected to use some of this to help with the costs of your living situation in Shared Living.

There is more information about CLBC on their website at [www.communitylivingbc.ca](http://www.communitylivingbc.ca) If you want help reading the information, please ask. We are happy to help you.



## Getting to Know You and Making Plans

When you let us know you are interested in Life sharing services with us, a Life Sharing Manager will meet with you and talk about what is important to you. Things you like, things you don't like and what you hope your home life will be like. This might involve also thinking about your health, things you do in the community, your work, and your safety. We will also talk about your rights, responsibilities, and privacy. Talking about these things helps us to find the best home and match for you.

We will have a meeting with you, and the people who are important to you, to talk about all of these things as well as your hopes and dreams for the future. Talking about your hopes and dreams helps us create a plan for you so that you can accomplish your goals. With your support team, you will review and update your plan as things change for you, or as time passes.



## Visits

In order to make a good choice, a Life Sharing Manager will arrange for you to meet the person or family that they believe might be a good match for you. These visits are a chance to get to know one another, spend some time together, and talk about sharing your lives and home together.



When we introduce you to the new people, you can visit with your family, a friend, or on your own. Sometimes it might take a few visits to know how you feel about the person or family. You might also decide to spend a weekend or overnight with them as part of getting to know them and to see how you feel.

Your Life Sharing Manager will make sure you have a chance to decide what timelines are best for you and will also talk to you about whether or not the match seems like a good one for everyone.

## Moving In



When there is agreement between you and the person or family that you have been visiting, about sharing a home, your Life Sharing Manager will help you plan for your move. Your family might be involved and help you move or, the family or person you will be living with might assist you. Either way, the details will be worked out ahead of time so that you know what to expect.

## After the Move

Your Life sharing manger will visit you, and the people you are living with, quite often for the first few weeks that you are living together to make sure that everything is going well. They will meet with you to talk about how things are going.

Some people get used to a new living situation quite quickly and others take a little while longer. It is important that you know that you can trust your Life Sharing Manager with telling them about how you are feeling. They will help you sort out problems and answer questions when you have them.

For the first year, you can expect to have lots of contact with your Life Sharing Manager. As you feel more settled, your Life Sharing Manager will visit at least every other month. It is important for you to know that you can always call them if you have any concerns or just want to check in and say hi! Every year, you will have a planning meeting where we will discuss your goals, your needs, and wishes to make sure you are in charge of your life.



## Informed Consent and Choices

Being an adult means making lots of choices and decisions in your life. We will support you to get the information you need to make choices and give informed consent.

Informed Consent means that you understand the decisions we are asking you to make about:

- Your choice of service from us;
- The information about you that we want to share with other people to support your goals and plans;
- How we will use any information that is collected.

To help you with your decisions, we will make sure you have the information you need about possibilities, opportunities, possible risks and consequences of the choices you make.



Sometimes the choices and decisions you make might involve us talking to others that care for you such as your family, friends, advocates, or professionals who work with you. Before we do this, we will ask for your permission.

## Your Personal Life and Decisions

We strongly believe that everyone has the right to make choices about what they like, what they want to do, and how they want to live. Your personal choices are very important when thinking about a home to live in. It is also important to consider the people you might be moving in with and the things that are important to them.

## Making a Shared Commitment

The beginning of a Life Share relationship is the perfect time for everyone to share with each other what they expect to give and get from the relationship. Taking the time to listen and think about each other's expectations, and reach a shared commitment of how you will be in relationship with each other is a key first step in establishing a relationship that is respectful and works for everyone.

Each Life Share Commitment will be created differently and will reflect the uniqueness of the relationship. However, here are some pointers to consider when creating your Shared Commitment...



- Set aside at least two hours to create your Shared Commitment – it might not take this long – but you don't want to run out of time!
- Make sure that you gather in a place that is comfortable for everyone – share some food, making a commitment is a celebration!
- Please invite everyone who lives in the home and is part of the extended family.
- Decide how you are going to make a record of your commitment – in writing, on tape, on video, write a song or a poem, do a piece of artwork, or even write a story.

Your Shared Commitment may include your hopes and dreams for the relationship (trust, honesty, respect and what these things mean to you. Some things to think about are:

- What about privacy?
- How do we resolve conflict?
- Favorite meals?
- Personal deal breakers?
- How to celebrate holidays – real tree, fake tree, no tree?
- Bed time, up time?
- Shower schedule – how much hot water is there?
- Family – invited guests or 'the door's always open'
- Pets - yes, never, maybe, unlikely?





- Friends over– yes, never, sometimes?
- Touchy stuff – sex, drugs and partying- yes, never, maybe, likely?

Your Life Sharing Manager may have been part of creating and recording your Shared Commitment, but if not, please forward them a copy and keep a copy for yourself and revisit it often.

All relationships grow and change over the years, as do the people in them. Therefore it is important go back and check each year to see if your Shared Commitment is still true and reflective of your Life Share relationship. If it is, great! If not, have a chat, renew your Commitment, and continue the journey.

A Shared Commitment is something that everyone in the relationship does their best to honor and, from time to time, everyone is going to fall short. If the time comes when someone in your relationship isn't honoring the Shared Commitment, the first step is to have a conversation. Try to uncover why the commitment is not being met. Ask questions, seek to understand, compromise. Check out the Contractor Conflict Resolution information and other valuable resources on the BACI LSN web page. Talk to each other, trusted friends and your BACI Life Sharing Manager.



## Relationships

Everyone needs friends and people who love them in their lives. BACI expects that the people you live with will help provide supports and information for you to develop and maintain healthy relationships with the people you choose. If you have questions about safe sex, privacy, sexual orientation, gender identify, birth control, or other things, we will help you find the answers.

You may also wish to learn about how to manage transportation to see friends and family or how to solve communication issues if they arise with friends. You can ask and expect to receive help with these needs.



If we are concerned that you may be at risk in the relationships you are choosing, or if your family is worried, we will talk about this together and plan for how you can stay safe.

## Privacy

Everyone has a right to privacy in their lives. You will have a separate bedroom, with a door that closes, for your use and to decorate according to your taste. We expect that the people you live with will respect your privacy by knocking on bedroom and bathroom doors before entering and always asking permission to enter.



The people you live with are not allowed to open or read your mail, unless you ask them to do so. Your phone calls are private as well unless you decide you want to talk about them.

## Visitors

Your friends and family members should be welcomed and encouraged to visit if you wish them to. Any of your visitors also have a responsibility to treat other people in the home, and the home itself, with respect at all times. If you wish to arrange an overnight visit, this should be pre-planned with the people you live with.

We encourage you to have your friends and family meet the people you live with before they come into the home. This is an important thing to talk about early on in the relationship to help build trust and prevent misunderstandings.



## Pets

Pets are very important to many people. If you wish to have a pet it is important that you talk with the people you live with first.

The pet must be:

- Agreed to by everyone in the home.
- Not allowed to hurt people or damage property.
- Looked after by you and the costs of the pet paid for by you.
- Ok with the bylaws of the city, or any other rules for where you are living.
- Kept clean and healthy, including a clean-living space.



If you have a therapy animal that helps you with your day to day life, we will make sure that the home you are living in will welcome them.

## Food

We know that some people have special diets that are important to keep them healthy. We also know that everyone has things they like to eat and things they don't. We will be sure to talk with you about your food choices and likes and dislikes. The person or family you live with will also likely have their preferred foods and mealtimes. We will help you talk about this as part of making choices about where you live.



## Money

We will make sure we talk to you about whether or not you want or need any help with managing your money. If you need some help, the people you live with will offer that support.

The Life Sharing Manager will make sure your money is kept safe and that you are part of the decisions about how it is spent and managed. If you choose to have help managing your money, the person or people you live with will track how it is spent, and make sure that you have access to these records at any time.



## Personal Property

The person or family you live with is expected to help you protect your personal property. They may keep a list of your personal belongings to help you keep track of the things you own.

## Government Benefits and Assistance

You have the right to have food, shelter, clothing, and financial security. We will provide information and support to people and their families to ensure these rights are being met. We maintain up to date information on the policies and benefits of social assistance programs for people with disabilities and seniors.

## Records and Files

When you choose Life Sharing, a record (file) will be put together which will hold important information about you. Some of the information we keep in your file is:

Contact/ emergency information	Release of Information forms
Volunteer or paid work you do	Consent Forms
Demographic information: age, gender, language, etc.	Critical Incident Reports
Orientation checklist	Referrals to other resources/supports
Support Plan and Goal Plans	Medical information, including medications you take
Updates from the people you live with and/or reports for CLBC	Exit Summary Report

## Access to Records

You may see your records at any time, by asking your Life Sharing Manager to show them to you. If you need help to understand what is in the records, they will explain it to you. Your information is confidential. This means that any other person, including your family members, must have your permission before they can view your records.

## Your Rights and Responsibilities

It is very important for you to know about, exercise and advocate for your rights. We will make sure we talk to you about them every year or more often if you would like us to.

We all have certain rights and those rights come with responsibilities.

## What is a right?

Rights are a set of rules to protect people and make clear what is allowed. Everyone in Canada has the same rights and these are protected by laws. Rights help to make sure everyone is respected and safe.



## Some responsibilities that comes with having rights:

- Respecting the rights of others.
- Making sure that other people don't ignore your rights (speak up!).
- Understanding that there are consequences or risks when we make decisions (but you still get to choose).

## You have the right to expression!

You have the right to have an opinion and speak up. You have the responsibility to know that others have the same right to have and share their own opinions.

You have the right to make personal choices, like eating the food, wearing the clothes, and practicing the religion you want, or practicing no religion. You have the responsibility to understand how your choices might impact your health and other things, or the choices of others.



You have the right to express your gender in the way you wish. You have the responsibility to respect the gender of others, and how they express it.

You have the right to express the cultural or ethnic identity you feel included in. You have the responsibility to respect the cultural or ethnic identity of others.

## You have the right to equality and access.

You have the right to have access to the same services as others. You have the responsibility to meet the requirements for the service (eligibility, providing required information, showing up for your appointments).

You have the right to understand information and to be understood. You have the responsibility to let someone know if you don't understand, or if someone misunderstands you. *Tips: Ask for plain language.*



You have the right to access your personal information and have it stay private. You have the responsibility to make sure you're keeping other people's personal information private.



## You have the right to Relationships.

You have the right to love, be married or be a parent, if you want to. You have the responsibility to understand that others have the right not to love you back.

You have the right to have sexual relationships (or not!). You have the responsibility to make sure you have consent from your partner, respecting when they say “no” and be aware of potential risks.



You have the right to be respected by your family, friends, staff, or partner. You have the responsibility to be respectful of other people and to speak up if you are not being respected.

## You have the right to employment.

You have the right to work, and be paid the same wages as anyone else doing the same job. You have the responsibility to show up on time, be respectful and do the job you were hired to do.



You have the right to refuse unsafe work. You have the responsibility to do your work safely, and to follow the rules of your employer.

You have the right to ask for reasonable accommodations\* so you can do your job. You have the responsibility to let people know if you need an accommodation.

## You have voting rights.

You have the right to vote for who you want and to keep it private if you want to. You have the responsibility to learn about the candidates and political parties and make an informed decision.

You have the right to protest with others. You have the responsibility to understand that there may be risks or consequences to your actions.



You have the right to ask for information and accommodations\* you need to vote. You have the responsibility to understand what support you need.

## You have financial rights.

You have the right to have access to your money. You have the responsibility to keep your banking information and cards code private and to not give your card to anyone.



You have the right to spend your money how you want it. You have the responsibility to budget your money and make sure you have enough money to live (pay rent, food...)

You have the right to have a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) if you have a disability. You have the responsibility to learn about and follow the rules and requirements of an RDSP.

## You have housing rights.

You have the right to have privacy in your own home. You have the responsibility to let people know when you need your private space.



You have the right to have a choice of who you live with. You have the responsibility to be respectful of other people and to speak up if you are not being respected.

You have the right to decorate and have your room the way that you like it. You have the responsibility to keep your room safe, and reasonably clean. For example, so nothing will fall on you or catch on fire.

## Safety and Emergency Procedures

The safety of everyone who uses our services is very important to us. The home you live in will have an inspection before you move in, and then each year after that. Any special safety issues you might have will be looked after. Your Life Sharing Manager will talk to the people you live with about fire extinguishers and how to get out of the house if there is an emergency.

The people you live with must have First Aid and CPR and will be trained on how to report injuries and prevent or respond to violence.

Life Sharing Managers are required to report all injuries or anything that could have resulted in an injury. If you are hurt, we will make sure that your emergency contact is called. We must also report



serious incidents to Community Living British Columbia (CLBC).

Any cars or trucks that are used by the people you live with to give you rides, must have up to date insurance and be safe. The people who give you rides must also have a valid driver's license.

We encourage you to report any safety concerns to your Life Sharing Manager or to the people you live with. We will let you know when and how the concern has been addressed.

## Health Care

Your Life Sharing Manager will make sure that the people you share a home with will give you the right amount of support to look after your health, including dental care, allergies, and any special health concerns that you might have. You will be supported to choose your own doctors, dentists, and other health care people



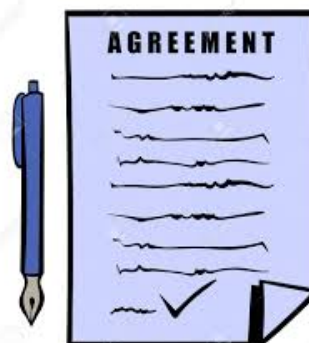
We will make sure that you to see your doctor and dentist at least once a year. The people you live with will assist you get to these appointments if needed. A written record of which doctors, dentists, and other health care professionals you see will be in your file.

## Restrictions of Rights

In order to help some people, stay healthy and safe, there are times when it might be necessary to limit their choices. This would only happen as a last resort when your safety is threatened, and all other positive kinds of support have not worked. Before we would restrict your rights, we will check with you and/or your family member and get permission. We will also talk to a professional consultant for their input.

Some examples of how your rights might be restricted are:

- Limits on your access to parts of a home or building, food, activities, visits, or personal property;
- Medication to help control your emotions (as part of a PRN protocol);
- Physical restraint to keep you safe (and as part of an approved Safety Plan).



If you agree to your rights being restricted, the information will be written down and talked about every year to make sure it is still needed. If you do not agree, we cannot restrict your rights without your permission. However, this may affect your choices as to where and with whom you are able to live.

## Medications

Some people take medications prescribed by a doctor. If you are responsible for taking your own medication, it is your responsibility to take it when you need it, and to keep it safely stored, away from children and pets. If you need help to take your medication, the people you live with will help you.



## How You Can Help Keep Others Safe

### Smoking and Vaping

In order to protect the people, you live with, smoking and vaping might only be permitted in special places outdoors. If you smoke or vape, you will have to agree to these arrangements as outlined in the Shared Commitment.

### Weapons

All people have a right to feel safe. A weapon is anything that is used to hurt anyone. You are not allowed to have a weapon or threaten to use a weapon in your home or in the community. If you are carrying, using, or threatening to use anything as a weapon, you might have your services suspended. The Police may also be called.



### Illegal Activities

Illegal activities, like selling drugs, are not allowed, whether by the people you live with or yourself.

## Complaints and Concerns

Sometimes there might be a disagreement between you and the people you live with or with your Life Sharing Manager. We hope you will first try to solve problems by talking. If this does not help, or if you feel uncomfortable about speaking to the person directly, you can call the Senior Manager of Life Sharing who will talk to you about what to do.



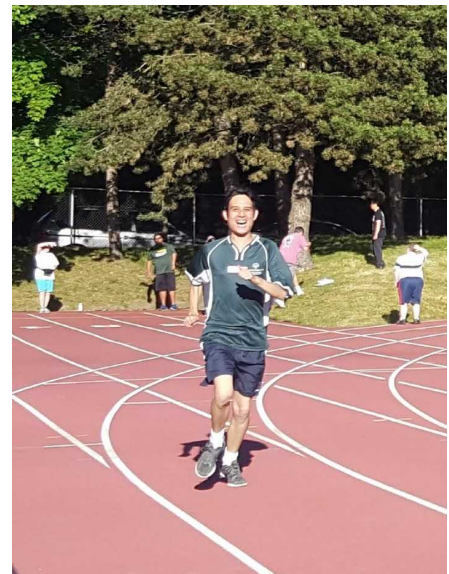
Fill out the Compliments or Concerns section on the BACI website – [www.gobaci.com](http://www.gobaci.com) -- or call the Senior Manager of Life Sharing at 778-888-4282. They will get back to you within 10 days. They will have a meeting with you to talk about the issue.

## Providing Our Best Service

We want to make sure that we hear how you feel about our services and supports. We will meet with you in person to ask you how we are doing and will ask you to fill out a survey. We use your feedback to help make sure our services are meeting your needs and to find ways to make them better.

Other ways that we might get feedback could include:

- Site surveys by an accreditation organization like CARF;
- Visits by someone from Community Living BC;
- Visits by other evaluators as determined by BACI or Community Living BC.



If you would like further information about how we ask for feedback, please talk to your Life Sharing Manager, or phone 778-888-4282 to speak with the Senior Manager of Life Sharing.

**Thank you for reading this Handbook. If you have any questions, please talk to your Life Sharing Manager, your family, or a friend.**





## My Notes: