



## How to Choose Transitional Care or Rehabilitation Services

Often when it's time to leave the hospital, a patient still may require rehabilitation following a stroke, surgery or extensive treatment for kidney, heart or respiratory conditions. Transitional care may be all that's needed, or it may come while the family locates a rehabilitation center.

### Transitional Care

This service is usually offered at the hospital until the patient can be released to their home or to a rehabilitation center. Transitional care is skilled care that focuses on helping patients regain their strength and mobility. The stay is usually no longer than two weeks. Patients are usually cared for by their own doctors, with assistance from licensed nursing staff and teams of therapists – speech, recreational, occupational, respiratory and others.

Questions family members and the patient may want to ask about transitional care include:

- Does my insurance cover this stay?
- Do we need to make any special admittance arrangements?
- What types of services are offered?
- Is my doctor in charge of my case while I'm here?
- How long can I stay in transitional care?
- Are my meals included?

### Rehabilitation Centers

Specialized therapies are provided on an inpatient or outpatient basis, with the goal of helping individuals reach their highest level of functioning in daily life. Rehab, when recommended by a doctor, is usually covered by personal health insurance or Medicare, if the patient is eligible. Locations may be free-standing, in connection with a hospital, or a part of the continuum of care at a retirement community.

Questions to ask about rehabilitation centers include:

- Is the location close enough for family members to make regular visits?
- Are there varying levels of care?
- Will you be seeing your doctor or a new one?

- If it's a new doctor or a medical director, how often is this person in the center? Is this person board-certified for rehabilitation?
- Will you be working with a regular team of therapists?
- Is the team experienced in treating your condition?
- Is there an individual treatment plan for each patient?
- Who is responsible for monitoring the plan?
- Has the center or team demonstrated success in treating your condition, including successfully discharging patients back into the community?
- Does the staff understand family concerns?
- Does the center have medical support in case of a complication or new illness?
- Will prescriptions supplied by your personal doctor be honored and continued by the staff at the center?
- Will the equipment used in rehab be fitted to each individual patient?
- Is the program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and/or the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)?
- Does the center offer support groups for patients and/or families?

Rehabilitation can be a slow and difficult process, but patients in rehab often build rapport with other patients and begin to encourage one another. Choose a rehabilitation center that is reputable, makes you feel comfortable and, if at all possible, is close enough for the family to be supportive.

*Resources: L.I.F.E. Center, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago; University of Pittsburgh, Institute on Aging; Little Company of Mary, Torrance, CA.*

