

# Handbook for Individuals and Families



## Independent Living



community **living** society

Our Vision

*Communities where every person lives with dignity and  
enjoys a full life.*

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**Important**

This Handbook was printed on September 26, 2023.  
 Please note that contents may have changed and the most recent copy of this Handbook should be referenced on our Resource Portal on the CLS website.  
<https://www.communitylivingsociety.ca/portfolio-items/important-information-about-cls/>

Thank you

## Introduction to the Independent Living Program

The Independent Living program is designed for individuals who are already living or are planning to live in their own home (apartment, suite, house, mobile home, etc.), and need some support to do so. This support is different for everyone because everyone has different wants and needs. Some people need only a few hours of support each week and other people may need as many as 10 to 15 hours of support each week.



Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) will make the decision about the level of service available to you. Once we know the number of hours you have been assigned, we work with you to learn about the things that matter to you so we can make sure we are using your approved hours to support you to enjoy the lifestyle you want.

### Guiding Principles

#### ***Maximizing Independence***

We believe that everyone has a right to enjoy as much independence in their own home as they can. We work hard to make sure we are providing “just enough support” in the areas we identify with you. We also make sure we listen to you about when to step out of the way as you increase your skills, build your network, and feel confident to handle tasks on your own or with the CLS employee working with you.

## ***Building Community Relationships***

Having relationships with neighbours and other community members strengthens everyone's ability to enjoy community life. Choosing to live independently does not mean you need to be able to do everything on your own. We know that all community members depend on each other as neighbours, family, friends, and helpers (paid or unpaid). Getting to know people in your community provides a way for you to increase your networks and independence.

For instance, your neighbours may ask you to feed their pet when they are away or to keep quiet in the hallways when passing by, and you may need to call on them in an emergency. You may also need to know when to find paid help with household tasks or when to report problems to your landlord that you cannot fix on your own.

We help you to find and build healthy relationships that allow you to feel connected to others and safe in your home.

## ***Respecting Lifestyle Choices***

We respect your right to choose a lifestyle that works for you. Living independently, whether on your own or with a partner or roommate, means you have the option to choose how you want to live your life.

- Day to Day: All day-to-day decisions such as what to wear, when and what to eat, when to get up or go to bed.
- Lifestyle: Decisions about the people you want in your life and the activities you choose.
- Living Arrangements: Decisions about roommates or other shared living arrangements you might consider, where you might want to live, type of accommodation, decorating, etc.

Our support focuses on helping you explore how to match your lifestyle choices to the commitments you have made for yourself related to employment, further education and other interests, as well as your long-term vision for your life. We want to support you to make lifestyle choices that respect your values and preferences.

### ***Developing Skills***

We believe that we can be more effective in our support when we are helping you learn how to manage things on your own that you feel you could take on but have not had the opportunity to learn, or don't yet feel confident to handle on your own. Although you and your personal support network may have identified key areas where ongoing support may be needed, we will spend time with you looking at those areas where you would like to increase your independence. As much as possible, our support is intended to help you develop new skills and strengthen ones you already have so that you can enjoy a rich and full life living on your own.

We work together to decide what types of skills make sense to focus on during support times. Many of these may be practical skills that allow you to manage the tasks of daily living. Others may be focused on finances, budgeting, problem solving, health and safety, or relationships. In some cases, we will support you by providing direct coaching or training in your home or in the community. In other cases, we may help you access community-based training, other support and services, or mentorship opportunities.

### ***Staying Flexible and Responsive***

We know that people's lives do not always go according to plan, so we are flexible and responsive to your changing needs. The Independent Living Manager will check in with you regularly to make sure the supports you are receiving are meeting your needs and will work with you and your support worker to make any necessary changes or suggest changes if they notice you are struggling with certain things or have successfully mastered others.

Our goal is to support you to both enjoy greater independence and to maintain a standard of living that safeguards your well-being. We want to assist you to make sure that all parts of your life are stable so you can be successful in your chosen lifestyle. There may be times you will need extra support or a change in support to manage a difficult time or when making a change in your life like starting a new job or moving to a new home. Sometimes, we can adjust hours to meet your needs and other times we may help you advocate for additional funding or help you access other community supports. In some cases, we also help you find different housing arrangements that may better meet your needs.

### ***Honouring the Dignity of Risk***

Having a good life means trying new things, making mistakes, and learning from these experiences. Sometimes when you try new things or make choices about how you want to live or what you want to do, there may be risks to your overall health and wellbeing or risks to others.

Even though your safety and wellbeing is extremely important, we do not believe we should 'protect' you from doing the things you want to do. We know that you will be stronger, safer, and more comfortable living on your own when you make your own choices and learn from them. Our goal is to help you make informed choices about the life you want to lead and the activities and actions you choose to do. We do this by working with you to explore options, to think about the risks and benefits of different actions and the skills you might need to be successful, and to learn from the choices you do make.

We also help you bring together people that can support you when things don't go exactly as you hoped, and you need support to deal with what happens. We call these people your **personal support network**. Having people you trust that can help guide you and be there for you is important when you live independently.

Independent Living does not offer 24-hour support. You must be able to manage basic living skills on your own or through other supports or people.

*Sometimes, if a few more hours are needed, you can negotiate additional hours with CLBC so don't let this stop you if you feel this service is right for you.  
We can help you talk with CLBC.*



# What Can I Expect from the Program - Your Questions – Our Answers

## How many hours of support do I get?

CLBC may already have approved a specific number of hours per week for you. These hours cover both direct service time (time with CLS employees in person or virtually) and the time we need to develop the service and ongoing support for you.

*Not all approved hours will be spent directly with you.*

We will work with you to confirm the number of hours your support person (or worker) will spend with you each week and how you want to use them.

## How do we decide how to use my direct service hours?

We will work with you and any other people you have chosen to help you get started with services. People you might include are your family, roommates, spouse, or other loved ones.



We will spend time with you to confirm:

- ✓ What supports are your highest priority.
- ✓ How you like to be supported – what type of support works best for you.
- ✓ Where and when to provide support so you get the most from it.
- ✓ Who will be providing support.

*What is expected of me?*

We ask that you:

- ✓ Make sure you are home or at the chosen meeting place for your scheduled service times.
- ✓ Make sure to entertain guests outside of service time.
- ✓ Make sure your home is smoke free for a minimum of 1 hour before any scheduled service time in your home.
- ✓ Provide us with at least 24 hour's notice if you need to cancel service.
- ✓ Contact us if you cannot show up at the place/time we agreed to meet so we know you are safe.
- ✓ Make sure you let us know if you have any concerns with the service we are providing.

NOTE: Hours are not banked if you cancel your supports.

What is included in my service hours?

Hours of service are typically used for:

- Your service times with the assigned CLS employee, referred to as your support or support worker.
- Regular check-ins or planning sessions with you to be sure we are on track with your services.
- Support to help address any unexpected issues or concerns that may come up – we try to build these into your service time but we

***Your Home, Your Costs***

*Like anyone living in community, you are responsible for your own moving and housing costs such as:*

- ✓ *Rent*
- ✓ *utilities*
- ✓ *all household expenses (food, clothing, cleaning costs, recreation, repair and maintenance costs, etc.)*
- ✓ *other living costs*

also know that sometimes things will come up that you need to address more immediately. When we are not able to respond to your needs, we make sure you have a number to call to get this support hmmm and what number would this be and what times can they call it?

Who decides what type of support I receive?

**You Decide!!**

**by taking the lead in your service planning**

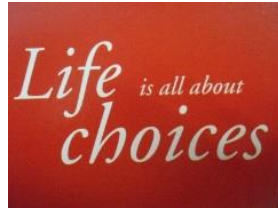
*How do I get started in developing my service plan?*

We use the information we gathered from you during your initial intake to create an initial plan. This plan identifies your priority support needs and will be the initial focus while we get to know you and learn more about how you want to live your life and how we can tailor our supports to help you achieve your goals. Once we know you better, we can update the initial plan, so we make sure we are on track with your services. You can also include your family, spouse, and other loved ones in developing this plan.

*How do I make sure my plan is meaningful to me?*

To make sure this plan is meaningful to you and reflects what you want, we will spend time with you getting to know:

1. *Your Lifestyle choices* –We want to be sure we understand and respect the things that matter to you and how you want to live your life.
2. *Your Community Connections* – We want to know about the people and places where you already have connections and may count on for support. We also want to find out about any potential new connections you would like to make or want to find out more about to support you to be successful living independently.
3. *Your Support Needs and Preferences* - We will take time with you to find out how you like to be supported when you are learning new things, taking on new responsibilities, or needing direct support with any activities of daily living.



4. *Any Risk Factors or Areas of Concern*– We want to know about the things that are concerning to you or that might cause challenges for you to live independently so we can make sure we help you plan for and address them.

### What does my plan look like?

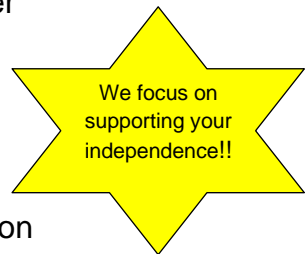
We make sure your plan is written in a way that is understandable to you, to the employees that will be supporting you, and anyone else who you choose to share it with.



### What do I want support with?

You may decide you would like support with 3 or 4 key areas such as how to organize/clean your home, how to cook specific meals, how to budget or pay bills, or how to find a new doctor/dentist. We will help you set some specific goals in these areas. What other areas would be important to you that your support can help you with?

- Helping you increase your skills or learn new things;
- Helping you develop routines to make sure things get done;
- Supporting you to get to know and develop relationships with people and places in your community;
- Helping you find and access other supports;
- Providing direct support with activities of daily living;
- Checking in with you, providing you with encouragement when you could use motivation to stay on track with a goal.



When, How Often and Where would I like supports?

- We will plan when, where, and how often you want to work on each area;
- For instance, you might only want to work on paying your bills once a month at the bank or learning on-line banking at home;
- Cooking may be something you want to do weekly at home.

What do I expect to gain from focusing on the identified goals?

- This step is helpful because we get clearer about your expectations so we can focus our support on what you need;
- For instance, you may be very comfortable using a stove and reheating food but want to actually learn some recipes so you can save money by buying food to prepare rather than readymade items.



What if my needs change?

Your service plan is intended to support you. If your needs change, we will work with you to update your plan.



We expect plans to change as you gain skills, increase your community connections, and learn how to manage any challenges you encounter. CLS employees will review your plan with you at least once a year but will talk with you about it more often and change it as needed.

*What type of activities can be included in my plan?*

In the Independent Living program, we support you to do many things. We stand alongside you and assist or teach you how to do different things. We do not do the task for you. Our goal is to teach you how to do tasks so that you will eventually no longer need our help.



*Activities in your Plan that we can support you with:*

- Learning how to cook;
- Learning how to grocery shop;
- Learning how to maintain a clean home;
- Making your home safe (ie: plan for and practice handling emergencies);
- Making a budget to help you save money or help you to spend it in a better way;
- Finding a job;
- Finding a volunteer position;
- Booking and attending medical appointments;
- Providing resources for emotional support during difficult times;
- Making decisions;
- Talking with your landlord;
- Finding a place to live;
- Developing and maintaining friendships and relationships;
- Being involved in your community.



*Things we cannot support you with:*

- Doing your cooking for you;
- Cleaning your house for you;
- Telling you how to spend your money;
- Making you spend time with people you would prefer not to;
- Driving you around with no purpose;
- Doing things for you that you do not actually need support to do;
- Telling you what choices to make;
- Telling you where to live;
- Running errands for you;

- Feeding your pets or water your plants while you are away.

If you are not sure if the type of support you want fits under this service, please ask us!

*What if I need help with something and CLS does not offer that support?*

If you need a type of support or a service that the Independent Living program does not offer, we would be happy to refer you to another organization that might. CLS has developed relationships with many other organizations in our community.



*What if I decide I need more help than I can get from this service?*

We understand that your needs are constantly changing. If you decide you need more support than you are receiving, we encourage you to talk to your facilitator at Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) and discuss your options.

*Can I combine this service with other services?*

There may be some other services available to you while you are also receiving support in the Independent Living program. You would need to discuss this with a facilitator at CLBC.



### What if I don't like the support I am getting?

1. If you do not like the support you are receiving, we encourage you to first talk to your Independent Living Manager or support worker and see if there are any changes that can be made.
2. If you do not feel this was successful, we encourage you to contact the Director of Programs for Independent Living. You can call our main phone number at 604.523.0303 to obtain the contact information.
3. If you are still not satisfied, you can make a formal complaint following the steps outlined in our Feedback and Complaints process. It is important for us to get feedback about our services when we are not able to work it out directly with you within our team. Making a complaint will not affect your services. It helps us get better!

Details of our Feedback and Complaints process is provided during intake, is on our website and is reviewed with you annually.

### When can my service times be scheduled?

Usually, service hours are scheduled during the day on weekdays. We schedule times during these hours to match your needs and your other activities. Many people work during weekdays or have other commitments; therefore, if needed, we can provide support on the weekend or in the evening. To make sure your schedule fits for you, your service plan will include *what, when, where, and how* services will happen. This schedule may change as your service needs change.

OUR  
SCHEDULE!

## What if I need to change my service times?

### *Temporary Changes*

We know sometimes you may need support outside of scheduled service times to handle a special activity or an unexpected situation. That's part of life! We try to be as flexible as possible to be able to support you.

This means that:

- Sometimes you may ask us to adjust your service time to support a special activity or goal (examples might be when you need support to attend a medical appointment or to learn how to get to a new job, etc.).
- You might ask us to help you deal with a problem that needs to be handled sooner than when your next session is scheduled. This may require us to ask someone else to change their service time or we might send another employee to help you.
- Your service time may be changed if someone else needs unexpected support when we typically meet with you. When we need to change your support time, we may offer to have another employee work with you or, if no one is available or you want the same employee, we will try to adjust your times, so you still have your needs met.

*That's  
Life!* 

### *Revamping My Schedule*

We expect that your needs will change over time as you develop your skills and competence managing your home and daily life. That's why we regularly review your services with you. We will make changes to your weekly schedule to match the ways that you want to use your support and the availability of our employees.

### Who will be supporting me?

Independent Living employees work as a team to support you. The Independent Living Manager is responsible for managing your services and for providing support and supervision of your support worker(s). They will work to match the skills and personalities of employees with your support needs and preferences and are open to making changes if matches are not working out.



All employees are qualified to provide support and receive ongoing training in:

- Person-centred planning and goal setting;
- Our values, ethics and guiding principles.

## **Health and Safety**

### How can you help me stay safe and healthy in my home?

Your health, safety, and well-being are important to us. In the Independent Living program, our focus is on helping you establish good practices so that you are safe and healthy in your home and community. This is important because when living on your own, you won't always have CLS employees or members of your personal support network around to help you.

### What support can I access to help me be safe?

We can help you plan for and address your health and safety needs by helping you to:

- ✓ Check your home for any hazards (we can help you develop your own checklist so you can do this regularly).

- ✓ Make and practice your emergency plan so you know how to handle emergencies such as:
  - fire
  - earthquake
  - medical emergency
  - power outage or other utility failure
  - intruders
- ✓ Get emergency supplies and a first aid kit.
- ✓ Have a list of emergency numbers to get emergency support.
- ✓ Have people you can call if you are worried or upset about something.
- ✓ Find supports in the community to help you if you have any health or other issues.
- ✓ Get to know your landlord and any neighbours who you might call on for support.



### What health and safety skills do CLS employees have?

CLS employees follow good safety practices when they are supporting you:

- ✓ Employees are trained in First Aid, CPR, abuse recognition, and responding to emergencies or critical incidents;
- ✓ Employees carry fully-stocked first aid kits in their vehicles;
- ✓ Employees, practicum students and volunteers have cleared a criminal record search;
- ✓ All employees whose vehicles you may drive in have the appropriate liability insurance;
- ✓ In the case of an emergency, accident or a 911 call,

*Employees may also have training specific to your needs if you require any specialized supports.*

# My Home

## What do I need to know about my living situation?

Unless you own your home, you will have a landlord. The landlord is responsible for making sure you pay your rent, you act responsibly in the home, you are not conducting any illegal activities in the home, and you are following the rules.

You will probably have to sign an agreement that outlines all of the rules and your responsibilities to live in this home. The legal name for this agreement is a “Residential Tenancy Agreement (RTA)”.



If you do not follow these rules, you may be asked to leave the home. We can support you to know these rules and responsibilities to help you be successful in living independently in your home.

# Transportation

In some cases, your support worker may use their vehicle to support you in doing specific tasks such as getting to a location that is not easily accessible by transit.



However, in most cases, this support is intended to be short term with a plan put in place to help you learn the steps or other options you can take to get you there independently as part of living on your own.

Steps may include:

- Learning the bus schedule
- Arranging for Handi-dart, or other driving services
- Or planning to do these tasks with family or friends who can drive.

## My Personal Support Network

### How might I involve my family or others?

You may have close family or other people who are important to you who you will naturally want to include in your life. If your family is not available or you would prefer to not have them involved for some reason, we encourage you to find others who are important to you to include in your life as part of your *personal support network*.

Your service hours with the Independent Living program are limited and scheduled; therefore, it is important for you to have a personal support network you can count on to support you when we are not available.



These are people you choose who are people you might count on for:

- help with important decisions;
- companionship and good times;
- community connections;
- problem solving;
- support in times of need.

Who decides how my personal support network is involved?



No matter who you choose to include in your personal support network, you decide who they will be. Like your lifestyle choices, we will make sure to check in and understand your decisions.

For instance:

- ✓ We ask who you want to include in planning and reviewing your services with us. You may choose to involve certain people and not others, or perhaps only involve them in only some decisions.
- ✓ We ask with whom and how you want us to share information about you. This means if someone in your personal support network calls to ask about you, we will share information only if you have given us permission to do so. You also get to decide what types of information you want to share.
- ✓ We ask you to provide us with emergency contacts. In an emergency, we will contact the people you have named as your emergency contacts. We only call the people who have been added to your emergency contact list.



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# Service Delays/Cancellations



Are there times my service might be delayed or cancelled?

Sometimes we may have to cancel or reschedule service with you if there is an emergency that prevents us from getting to you for any reason.

Examples include:

## *Severe Weather*

If there is severe weather that prevents safe travel in the community such as a snowstorm or high winds, your support worker may not be able to meet you as planned. You will be contacted by the Independent Living Manager and they can arrange with the people named in your emergency contacts to check in on you at your request.

## *A Community Emergency such as an Earthquake or Flood*

If it is not safe to travel to you, we will make sure to contact you if communication lines are open. If not, you will need to follow your personalized emergency plan.



### *Employee Emergency*

If an employee is in an accident, is unexpectedly sick, or has another type of emergency and is unable to meet you, they will call the Independent Living Manager who will try to find another employee to work with you. If that can't happen or you would prefer to wait for the employee to return, your service may be cancelled and rescheduled for another time.



Our goal is to help you be prepared for unexpected situations by practicing “What ifs?” together.

We also work with you to make sure you have emergency plans in place and people you can call when emergencies or upsetting events happen.

Are there times CLS can cancel my service time(s)?

What happens if I am not available or refuse service?

We respect your choices and will cancel service if:

- You don't answer the door or make yourself available for the session;
- You refuse service for that session.

In these cases, your time is not rebooked. The CLS employee has been booked for that time and must be paid for the time whether you show up or not.

What other times might CLS cancel service?

We need to make sure our employees are safe and free from harm. This means that if they come to meet you and they run into any of the following circumstances, they may have to end your session:

- If you are physically or verbally abusive and they feel they are in danger;
- If you have people visiting they don't know or expect to be there;
- If you are drunk or intoxicated;
- If you threaten them in any way (i.e. verbal threats, carrying/threatening with weapons).



Please note that CLS employees will need to report any threats of or acts of violence as a critical incident to CLBC and CLBC may need to follow up with you.

Your Health and Wellbeing is Our Priority

Employees will follow up with you before your next scheduled time to explore how we can support you if here are issues happening in your life that are impacting your ability to access services and get the support you need.



community **living** society

7th Floor – 713 Columbia Street  
New Westminster, BC, V3M 1B2

604-523-0303

[www.communitylivingsociety.ca](http://www.communitylivingsociety.ca)