

Finding a roommate

Making the decision to move into your own place is a big one and you may want or need to live with someone else for social, support or financial reasons. If you do want to live with a roommate or several roommates, there are some things to consider so that the living situation will be more successful. Finding the right roommate is a big deal because you will spend a lot of time together, perhaps for many years. Having a good relationship with your roommate will make your home a happier place to be.

Qualities to Look for in a Roommate

We are all raised in different ways and have learned different habits. We may like our food spicy or plain, we may be tidy or messy, we may be religious or not, we may be outgoing or shy. Whatever our ways of living, there are some qualities you should consider when looking for a roommate:

- **Trustworthiness** – Can you trust this person with your belongings when you are not around? Also, can you trust the people they bring into the house? You want to feel safe and secure in your home and with those around you.
- **Respectful** – Of course there will be times when you and your roommate have disagreements, but if you pick someone who is respectful and that you respect, then disagreements might not happen as much.
- **Cooperative** – Are you working as a team around the house? Are you sharing household duties? Can you agree on house “rules”?
- **Friendliness** – You want to be around the type of person that makes you feel good in the house versus the kind of person that brings you down.
- **Patience** – It is a reality that becoming roommates brings opportunities to see how people live and do things differently from ourselves. We were all raised slightly differently so our day-to-day habits will be different. This can become stressful, but we learn from one another and want to work together. This may take time. Remember as much patience as you need for the other person...they also need it for you!
- **Good Match** – Are you able to live together or are your personalities too different? Is one of you clean and the other one messy? What temperature do you like the house to be? While patience and flexibility are important, it is good to consider what you can and can't live with.
- **Communication** – It is important to have a roommate that can communicate with you and that you can communicate with. If you don't communicate, it could lead to frustrations that eventually become an argument. It is important to ask the questions about communication, including how a person likes to communicate and what can support good communication?

Practical Things to Discuss

- What do you want to get out of this arrangement? Before you can start searching for a roommate you must decide what you want from this living arrangement. Is it social? Do you need a roommate for financial reasons? Are you interested in an arrangement where you get support from a roommate or share supports?

- What kind of a schedule fits your needs? Do you like to go to bed early or stay up late? What happens if a roommate works different shifts resulting in them coming and going? If you are sharing paid supports, how does scheduling of your support staff work?
- Whether you are looking for a roommate for financial reasons or not, their ability to pay their bills and rent is important. Are they able to pay their share of the rent and other costs (electricity, cable, telephone, internet, groceries)?
- Some apartments allow animals while others do not. Do you want to have a pet? Does a potential roommate like pets? Someone can like pets but not be able to have them around because of allergies or health issues and this will need to be considered.
- Do you want to have a roommate that shares some of your interests? For some people this is not important but is good to know ahead of time.
- If you are living with a roommate it will be important to have some house rules about visitors. How often do you like having family and friends over to visit? What time is too late for visitors to stay? What is the arrangement for any overnight guests?
- People have different habits and ways of living. Are you ok living with someone who drinks alcohol? Do you smoke cigarettes or marijuana or are you comfortable with people who do?

Figuring Out Your Supports

Whether you have a roommate that provides support (either directly paid, in a situation where they have a free or reduced rent, or in some combination) or you and another roommate share supports that live-in or come in to your home, there will need to be lots of discussion on how support is arranged. It is important to write down your agreed upon arrangements, as well as how you will work things out if you find yourself in a disagreement about your supports. It is important to consider:

- What are the roles of your and your roommate's support networks (family members and friends) in providing you with support?
- If your roommate is providing you with support, what activities and tasks are they responsible for? When will they be expected or not expected to provide those supports?
- If you and your roommate both have support needs, are you planning on sharing any of your support resources (staff, technology, natural supports)?
- If natural supports or paid support staff come in, how often and on what schedule?
- What are your back-up systems when your roommate providing support or support staff are not available due to sickness, vacations or other circumstances?
- How are supports being paid for and organized? Are you doing this with help from a service provider, a microboard or person-centered society, a host agency, and/or with help from family or friends?

Roommates also Eligible for CLBC Services

As mentioned, there are many reasons you might want to have a roommate or even a couple of roommates. Young adults often share a house with others so they can afford to move away from their family. It is important to know that when 3 or more people eligible for CLBC supports live together in a home, it is considered a staffed residential service (group home) that has to be licensed. CLBC, as with all its services, determines who is most in need of the group home service and it has a process to identify whose support needs are most urgent. This process ensures that receiving services is fair and equitable to everyone. There are also rules that CLBC follows to make sure that, if a group home is purchased, these homes continue to be available to people with developmental disabilities even after the initial residents no longer live there. For this reason, if you are an adult thinking about living with more than one roommate for financial or other reasons, it is important to think about these and other things when choosing your roommates. Look for people you can live with who share your interests or hobbies and who you would enjoy spending time with.