



Imagine Different...Achieve Different Coalition

FAST FACTS: Lifesharing for Children w/ Complex Disabilities

Overview

Parents of children with complex health care and/or developmental disability needs can face multiple challenges: their child's needs; family issues such as housing, finances, or other family member's needs; and lack of awareness of services and supports. Such interacting challenges can overwhelm a family and lead them to worry they may have to place their child in a facility. Lifesharing can be an alternative.

Lifesharing offers families a way for their children with intellectual disability, autism or medical complexity with technology dependence to continue family life. There are two ways Lifesharing can be of help:

1. a family can receive additional supports, including being paid, to enable their child to grow up at home, or
2. a child can live with another loving, carefully-matched family with continued ties to their parents.

In either family arrangement, support is tailored to uniquely fit the child and their caregivers. Parents who choose the second alternative participate in the matching process and choose the alternate family for their child. Parents retain their rights. Children can share time between their parent's home and the Lifesharing family's home. A Lifesharing home is supported by funding from Pennsylvania's Office of Developmental Programs through a Medicaid waiver. Qualified and approved Lifesharing agencies provide recruitment, training, oversight, and support by qualified professionals to alternate family arrangements and assure the safety and quality of life a child receives. Lifesharing homes for unrelated children are licensed and inspected to ensure their health and welfare. Children in Lifesharing also have Supports Coordinators to coordinate and monitor the quality of services on a regular basis.

What Lifesharing may offer:

1. Income for families caring for their own child.
2. Shared parenting with another family chosen by the family.
3. Extended loving and committed relationships for a child.
4. Relief from fear of having to place a child in a facility.

How do I get started?

- Register your child with your county office of Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities Services.
- Once your child is deemed eligible for services, choose a Supports Coordination organization. With the help of your Supports Coordinator, complete an application for the Home and Community Based Services Waiver Program.
- If your child is in or at imminent risk of facility placement, make sure they are listed in the **emergency category on a PUNS** (Priority of Urgency of Needed Services) form.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Office of Developmental Programs
<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Disabilities-Aging/Pages/Lifesharing.aspx>

Pennsylvania Lifesharing Coalition
<http://www.palifesharing.com/>