



**Brain Injury Community Re-entry**  
(NIAGARA) INC.

*Turning the Key to Opportunity in Niagara since 1988*

---

**BICR's**  
**PARTICIPANT &**  
**FAMILY HANDBOOK**

---

## **Accessible Formats & Communication Supports**

Special accessibility accommodations and materials in alternate formats can be arranged by contacting Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc. at 905-687-6788 extension 663 or [www.bicr.org](http://www.bicr.org).

We are also interested in your comments and feedback about accessibility at BICR. Please send us your comments.

### *Disclaimer:*

*Brain Injury Community Re-Entry (Niagara) Inc. acknowledges funding support for many of our programs and services from the Ontario West HNHB and the government of Ontario.*

*The views expressed in this publication are the views of Brain Injury Community Re-Entry (Niagara) Inc. and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ontario West HNHB or the government of Ontario.*



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ALL ABOUT BICR</b>	
Acknowledgements	4
Purpose of the Handbook	5
Introduction to BICR	6
Mission, Vision and Statement of Philosophy	6
Model of Support	7
Eligibility Criteria	8
<b>RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	
Your Bill of Rights	9
What Are My Responsibilities?	10
Family and Participant Safety Responsibilities	10
<b>BICR GENERAL APPROACH TO SERVICE</b>	
Staff: Role and Responsibilities	13
Confidentiality	14
Your Relationship with BICR Staff	15
Managing Risks	16
Competency and Substitute Decision Makers	18
How BICR Works with Families	19
BICR Complaint Procedure	20
<b>CHALLENGING SUPPORT ISSUES</b>	
Introduction	22
Mental Health and Addictions	22
Sexuality	23
Infectious Diseases	24
Influenza and Pandemic Planning	25
Physical Support	26
Falls Prevention Strategy	27
<b>REFERENCE INFORMATION</b>	
Statement of Privacy Practices	28
BICR Privacy Policy	30

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc. wishes to acknowledge the generosity of CHIRS (Community Head Injury Resources Services) of Toronto for sharing their Client and Family Handbook with us. It is an excellent document and we appreciate the permission given to adapt it to meet the needs of BICR participants and families. As an agency funded by a variety of sources including Ontario West HNHB, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, third party payers, fundraising and private donations, we often share resources in order to provide the best service possible to individuals with an acquired brain injury and their families. We hope that this handbook will assist our participants by providing valuable information.**

**We also wish to acknowledge the use of materials developed by the Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy. This material was used in the Know Your Rights Booklet.**

## **PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK**

**WELCOME TO BRAIN INJURY COMMUNITY RE-ENTRY (NIAGARA) INC. (BICR)**

Often participants and family members who are new to BICR services have questions about who we are and how we approach our work with participants and families. This Handbook has been designed to address some of those questions and give you a better idea about what to expect. We hope this Handbook will give you the information that you need in order to work in partnership with BICR staff.

For information on BICR's programs and services please see the BICR Program and Services Guide and/or the BICR website ([www.bicr.org](http://www.bicr.org))

### **HOW DO I USE THE HANDBOOK?**

The Handbook is yours to keep for reference. Feel free to make any notes in it that will help you to keep track of important information. Please don't hesitate to ask questions.



## **INTRODUCTION TO BICR**

Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc. (BICR) is a non-profit organization that provides support services and rehabilitation to individuals living with the effects of an acquired brain injury (ABI). Based in Thorold, BICR serves the needs of adults throughout the Niagara Region.

Our organization was founded in 1988 by a group of concerned parents and professionals who felt that specialized ABI services were needed in the region. A volunteer Board of Directors consisting of the organization's founders, rehabilitation professionals and other community partners oversees our programs. Funding is provided by a variety of sources including the Ontario West HNH and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, third party payers, fundraising and private donations.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc. will provide support and leadership to individuals, their families and/or caregivers within the Niagara Region living with the effects of an acquired brain injury. We promote self-direction, facilitate opportunities for meaningful adaptation, and contribute to the development of the agency and its people. We participate in advancements in the field of rehabilitation, and participate in partnerships that foster ongoing dialogue with the individual and their support network.

### **VISION STATEMENT**

To lead in the field of acquired brain injury rehabilitation, providing advocacy for successful re-entry into the community.

### **STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

The provision of support services is based on the following beliefs:

- Each individual is a unique adult and is deserving of respect and dignity.
- Support should be flexible, individualized and reflective of choices, abilities and existing support networks.
- Choice often involves some elements of risk. Where possible, individuals will be permitted to experience the result of their choices to the extent that they are able.
- Independence is a dynamic process of accessing people and services as challenges and successes change.
- We rigorously promote the rights of the individual and promote recognition of acquired brain injury and how it affects individuals and families through ongoing advocacy and public education.

## BICR MODEL OF SUPPORT

Brain Injury Community Re-Entry (Niagara) recognizes the importance of empowering participants to make informed choices and to be actively involved in making decisions about their lives.

BICR is grounded in a community participation model: *Whatever it Takes*<sup>i</sup> and uses the following principles to guide services:

**Person – Centered:** Every individual is the best expert in their own lives. No two individuals with an ABI are alike and BICR focuses on getting to know each person as a unique individual. Staff are supporting individuals in activities that are relevant and meaningful to them.

**Respect:** Respect for the individual is paramount. Interventions must not do more harm than good. The participant, and family where requested, are seen as members of the rehabilitation team and are actively involved in the processes of assessment, development of goals, implementation of programs, and the monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

**Collaboration:** Staff work with participants to develop SMART<sup>ii</sup> goals that are Specific, Measurable, Agreed upon, Realistic and Time-based. Staff adopt this collaborative approach of “doing with” not “doing for” when working with participants. To do this, staff develop an understanding of the participant in the context of their previous lifestyle, relationships, abilities, values, behavioural patterns and personality. BICR encourages independence where the focus of rehabilitation is on real life, functional skill development.

**Focus on Strengths:** Services build on the participant’s strengths and capabilities. Rehabilitation efforts maximize strengths and focus on working with individuals to adapt to new ways of doing things. Staff recognize, appreciate and educate participants on reasonable risks.

**Community Interdependence:** BICR recognizes that everyone needs someone sometime. Natural supports last longer than professional supports. Therefore helping participants to develop and maintain meaningful relationships, leads to an increase in “Social Capital”<sup>\*\*</sup> (Condelluci)<sup>iii</sup> and is also an important element of the community rehabilitation process.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Social capital broadly refers to those factors of effectively functioning social groups that include such things as interpersonal relationships, a shared sense of identity, a shared understanding, shared norms, shared values, trust, cooperation, and reciprocity.

<sup>i</sup> Barry Willer, John Corrigan, *Brain Injury* 8(7): 647-59 November 1994.

<sup>ii</sup> SMART Goals: George T. Doran (1981).

<sup>iii</sup> Social Capital: The Key to Macro Change, Book by Al Condelluci and Jeffrey Fromknecht 2014.

## **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

**ACCESS TO THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY BRAIN INJURY COMMUNITY RE-ENTRY IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:**

- **Diagnosis of an acquired brain injury is defined as damage to the brain, which occurs after birth. This can be caused by: a traumatic event, such as a car accident, a fall, an assault or a sports injury. Also included are medical problems or disease, such as tumour, a brain aneurysm, an infection or stroke. Neurodegenerative disorders and congenital birth defects are not considered ABIs.**
- **Specialized nursing needs are addressed by other professional agencies.**
- **Age Criteria: Individuals who are 18 years of age or older. Consideration is given to individuals 16 to 18 years of age.**
- **You must reside in Niagara Region.**
- **Individuals must engage in working toward a mutually agreed upon goal.**
- **The person has the ability to participate and benefit from a rehabilitation program. This includes formulating realistic mutually negotiated SMART goals focusing on the establishment of independence at home, at work, at school and/or in the broader community.**
- **Significant psychiatric challenges should be managed and should not preclude the individual from being able to participate in services.**

**Admission will be deemed to have occurred when an external candidate begins to receive any component of service from BICR.**

**BICR recognizes that none of its existing supports are long term in nature when medical, physical, or specialized care needs of the individual surpass the agency's scope of services.**



## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES YOUR BILL OF RIGHTS**

Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has a law called the Long Term Care Act. This Act contains something called a Bill of Rights. This is a set of rules about how people who receive services should be treated. BICR adheres to this Bill of Rights.

### **HERE ARE YOUR RIGHTS AS THEY APPEAR IN THE ONTARIO LONG-TERM CARE ACT:**

1. You have the right to be treated in a courteous and respectful manner and to be free from mental, physical, and financial abuse.
2. You have the right to be dealt with in a manner that respects your dignity and privacy and promotes your autonomy.
3. You have the right to be dealt with in a manner that recognizes your individuality and that responds to your needs and preferences. This includes preferences based on ethnic, spiritual, linguistic, familial and cultural factors.
4. You have the right to have information about community services provided to you and to be told who will be providing the services.
5. You have the right to participate in the assessment of your requirements, development of your service plan, review of your requirements, evaluation and revision of your service plan.
6. You have the right to give or refuse consent to the provision of any community service.
7. You have the right to raise concerns or recommend changes in connection with the community services provided to you and in connection with policies and decisions that affect your interests, to your service provider, government officials or any other person, without fear of interference, coercion, discrimination or reprisal.
8. You have the right to be informed of the laws, rules and policies affecting the operation of the service provider and the right to be informed in writing of the procedures for initiating complaints about the service provider.
9. You have the right to have your records kept confidential in accordance with the law.

## **WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?**

### **TREAT OTHER PARTICIPANTS AND STAFF WITH RESPECT**

You are expected to treat all staff members and participants with courtesy and consideration and to remember that they have the same rights that you do.

### **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION**

BICR staff will work with you and your family to develop an Individual Support Plan to help you meet your goals, if you are in the COSS or residential programs. BICR cannot make this happen without your involvement. You are expected to actively participate in setting goals, planning for your support, and working with support staff toward meeting your goals.

### **USE OF ALCOHOL OR DRUGS**

Research indicates that substance use and brain injury do not mix. BICR will work with you to address issues related to alcohol or drugs, and will monitor with you the impact this might be having on your ability to work on your important goals or attend activities.

## **FAMILY AND PARTICIPANT SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES**

BICR is committed to participant safety during your course of rehabilitation and support services. This means that we are committed to continually assessing and improving Participant Safety and the safety of all individuals directly or indirectly involved in your support services.

BICR has developed a Participant Safety Steering Committee who respond to changes in safety trends and ensure that we are doing what is needed to provide a safe culture within our organization.

### **WHAT ARE MY HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES?**

BICR is committed to open and transparent communication and therefore we will make a determined effort to keep you and your family aware of important changes, incidents or events that relate to your health and safety. Please discuss any questions you may have about our disclosure policy with your BICR contact person

While we as an organization are working diligently to meet the highest safety standards, there are a number of responsibilities for you and your family to consider carefully.

**Use standard precautions.** This refers to proper hand washing techniques. It is well known that germs spread through contact, therefore proper, thorough hand washing is absolutely a must to contain the spread of infection. Good health is in your hands.

**Getting the flu shot** is an excellent way of protecting you and others from getting sick. Often individuals with a brain injury already have a suppressed immune system therefore protecting yourself from the flu will indirectly protect those people with whom you may come in contact.

**Use common sense** when you are not feeling well. You are welcome to visit any BICR sites when you are in good health. We encourage you to stay home if you are not feeling well and have cold like symptoms so that others are not exposed to your germs. Take care of your health by regular doctor visits, healthy eating and exercise.

**Practice proper lifting techniques.** In order to protect your back it is important to lift and turn with your legs, not with your back. Avoid bending from the waist. Caregivers are often lifting wheelchairs or transferring loved ones from a wheelchair to the car or bed and often do not take time to think about the strain being put on their own bodies. Learn how to transfer and lift in a proper, safe manner. This is so important and cannot be stressed enough.

**Maintain equipment at home.** Any equipment being used to provide physical support to a participant should be serviced regularly following the maintenance schedule provided by the manufacturer. Keep a list of telephone numbers and dates for regular service checks and develop a routine maintenance schedule for all home equipment.

**Smoke detectors** do save lives when they are in good working order. Ensure that your home smoke detectors are in working order by routinely changing the batteries every spring and fall. You must install carbon monoxide detectors as well since this gas is a hidden killer.

**Medication** that has been prescribed for you is an important part of your rehabilitation because we need you to be at your best in order to benefit from our support services. Medication is most beneficial when taken in the right dose, at the right time, in the right way. Your cooperation in taking your doctor

prescribed medication is invaluable. Some strategies that you may want to consider include:

Take your medication at the same time of day so it becomes a routine.

Link taking your medication with a particular activity, such as brushing your teeth.

Use memory aids i.e. purchase a dosette, a plastic container with separate pill compartments for different times of the day and different days of the week. Ask your pharmacy if they can put medications in individual “blister cards” with labels showing the time and day pills in each package should be taken.

Familiarize yourself with the drug information sheets that come with your medication.

BICR supports a non-smoking environment in keeping with the requirements of the Smoke Free Ontario Act (as amended); therefore, the participant, and all individuals present in the home must refrain from smoking/vaping while receiving service in the home, or during transit.

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding your medications call your doctor and/or pharmacy.

### **PARTICIPANT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

BICR regularly provides opportunities for you to provide us with feedback on how we are doing. This happens every 4 years through an Open Space process where we invite participants and families to a large face to face meeting.

Similarly, we request input from participants and families when we are developing new policies and procedures and new programs and services. Your thoughts and ideas are important to us!

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?**

For further information on these and other safety strategies discuss any questions or concerns you may have with your main contact person at BICR. You can also access information from pamphlets at BICR’s main office. The Regional Niagara Public Health Department is also an excellent resource for you. Contact the Public Health Department at 905-688-3762 or 1-800-263-4911 for further information.

## **STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each staff member has a university degree or college diploma. Many are educated in areas such as recreation, psychology, social work/social service worker, and behavioural science and technology. Staff are required to complete CPR/First Aid Training prior to being hired.

### **WHAT KIND OF TRAINING DO BICR STAFF HAVE?**

BICR staff members receive extensive on-site training where they learn about participant support, and agency systems and procedures. Employees attend a variety of orientation training sessions where they are introduced to the agency's philosophy and approach to service.

Staff receive training in brain injury anatomy, brain functions, and the consequences of brain injury. BICR workers are also trained in the following areas:

**Introduction to the brain & its functions**

**Ethics**

**Crisis Intervention & Safe Management Strategies**

**CPR and First Aid Training**

**Mental Health First Aid**

**Fire Prevention**

**Infectious Diseases**

**Back Care**

**Policies & Procedures around Health & Safety**

**Medication Administration Training**

**Behavioural Principles & Practices**

**New research into Areas of Rehabilitation**

**Communication**

**Documentation**

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality means keeping your personal information private. Information about you will only be shared under the following circumstances:

### **WITHIN YOUR BICR SUPPORT TEAM**

The staff at BICR work as a team. Team members may share relevant information with each other to make sure that you get the support you need.

### **WITH THE CONSENT OF YOU OR YOUR SUBSTITUTE DECISION MAKER**

If BICR staff are asked to release verbal or written information about you or your support to anyone outside of BICR, they will need permission from you or your substitute decision-maker. BICR will only share information that is relevant to the specific request.

### **IN EXCEPTIONAL SITUATIONS**

BICR's employees may be required to share confidential information (possible without your consent) in the following situations:

If required to do so by a court of law (e.g. a subpoena).

If you require emergency medical attention.

If you are in a situation that results in police involvement (e.g. missing person).

If BICR believes that you or someone else might be in danger, for example, if the situation involves abuse or potential self-harm.

**Please Note:**

Please refer to the BICR Privacy Statement and Policy on personal information for further information.

## **YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH BICR STAFF**

For many of you, this may be the first time that you have worked with support staff such as those at BICR. It can be a confusing relationship in that staff members may feel like friends at times. They are friendly and interested in how you are doing. They may support you in situations that are fun and social and sometimes very personal. However, the relationship is a professional relationship and is different from a “friend” relationship.

### **WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP?**

This means that staff members are there to support you as part of their job and their focus is on your safety, well-being, and your success toward the goals that you have set for yourself. This also means that staff members will not accept invitations to do social “friend” activities with you, will not go on dates with you, or develop a special relationship with you outside of your BICR support. Staff will not share a lot of personal information with you and may remind you about that if you ask. These guidelines are called staff-participant “boundaries”.

### **WHY ARE BOUNDARIES NECESSARY?**

Most agencies that provide some kind of support or counselling have guidelines (boundaries) like these. These boundaries help us all to know what to expect from each other. They are an important reminder that the focus of the staff-participant relationship is you and your goals. They are also a way to ensure that participants are treated equally and do not receive different treatment because of different relationships.

The staff at BICR are discouraged from accepting individual gifts for the same reasons. You may instead choose to express your thanks to a group of staff or to BICR as an agency. We very much appreciate your positive remarks and encouragement.

## **MANAGING RISKS**

Risk-taking is a necessary part of life for everyone. We all take risks to reach new goals, experience new things, and reach new levels of independence. However, it is important to recognize that although some risk-taking is necessary for growth, other risks may create problems or safety concerns that you may want to avoid. The challenge is learning how to anticipate situations that may be risky for you, and making a plan to manage that risk in a way that helps to keep you safe.

### **WHAT RISKY SITUATION SHOULD I BE AWARE OF?**

Everybody is affected differently by their brain injury, and it is impossible to list all the situations that could be risky for different people. These are a few examples that may be relevant for you:

#### **VULNERABILITY IN THE COMMUNITY**

Difficulties with memory and judgment may make you more vulnerable to dishonest people in the community. It may be harder for you to resist forceful sales people or to figure out if someone is really acting in your best interest. Some temptations like alcohol, drugs, and promises of sex or easy money may also be harder for you to resist. It is important to recognize these as risks to protect your money, health, and emotional well-being.

#### **INCREASED RISK OF BEING INJURED**

Some of the physical challenges that result from an ABI include ataxia, reduced muscle control, and poor balance. This may leave you at higher risk for certain kinds of accidents. You and your support staff may need to think of strategies to reduce your risk for injuries.

#### **INCREASED RISK ASSOCIATED WITH MAKING POOR DECISIONS**

Because of changes in the way you think, you may have difficulty making good decisions. For some people this includes challenges with judgment or impulsivity, e.g. you may find that you act before thinking, get angry more easily, or make questionable financial decisions.



## **WHAT CAN I DO TO MANAGE RISK IN MY LIFE?**

### **GET TO KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS**

It's important to have a realistic view of yourself. It often helps to talk to people you trust, such as family members or BICR workers.

### **USE COMPENSATORY STRATEGIES**

This means using tools to make up for challenges that you may have in certain areas. For example, if you have a poor memory and are worried about getting lost, you may choose to write down directions to where you are going and bring along a cell phone.

### **ASK FOR HELP AND ADVICE**

It isn't always easy to ask for help, but when you are not sure about something, please ask. BICR staff are understanding and will take your concerns seriously without judging you.

### **HOW DOES BICR ADDRESS RISK TAKING?**

BICR will respect your rights and support you to make decisions about your life and will also be looking out for your safety and well-being. BICR deals with all risky situations on an individual basis. As mentioned earlier, some risk-taking is necessary to achieve your goals and grow. BICR will support you to take reasonable risks to reach your goals.

When possible, BICR staff will problem-solve with you regarding risky situations to prevent or reduce the chance of something negative from happening.

## **COMPETENCY AND SUBSTITUTE DECISION MAKERS**

### **WHAT IS CAPACITY OF A PERSON?**

The ability, capability, or fitness to do something; a legal right, power, or competency to perform some act. An ability to comprehend both the nature and consequences of one's acts. A person of normal intelligence and sound mind has the capacity to dispose of his or her property by will as he or she sees fit.

Occasionally after an acquired brain injury, a person may experience a change in their ability to make decisions for themselves. When this happens, often another person who is capable, usually a close family member, will assist the incapable person with decision making.

Sometimes there is an assessment that is performed that assists in determining whether a person is capable of making sound decisions. This assessment may result in another person being assigned as a legal Power of Attorney or Guardian, who is given the power to make decisions for the incapable person.

When there are questions and/or conflicts about who is legally capable of making decisions for an individual, BICR will assume that the person with the ABI is capable unless we are in receipt of legal documentation that informs us otherwise.

## **HOW BICR WORKS WITH FAMILIES**

BICR believes in working with participant and families in a "family-centered" way. Being "family-centered" means that we encourage your family to be part of your support team, if they are available and you want them to be involved. BICR believes that families are a valuable resource because they know a lot about you, such as what you were like before your brain injury and what has gone on since that time. Families are also generally concerned for your well-being and want to support you to do the best you can.

### **HOW MUCH INFORMATION IS SHARED WITH MY FAMILY?**

BICR generally encourages sharing of information with families, because we have found that family involvement and support is often helpful. If you are capable of making your own decisions about who can receive information about you, you can decide whether your family receives information. If you are not capable and have a substitute decision-maker who makes these decisions for you, that person will decide how much information is shared. It should be noted that capable individuals who consent to share information with their family, may later ask that specifics not to be shared. This expressed wish to keep specific information confidential must be respected with the limits of confidentiality.

### **HOW IS MY FAMILY INVOLVED IN MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT MY SUPPORT NEEDS?**

When it comes to making decisions about your support, it often works best to talk about the decision together with you, your family, and your BICR support team. Most of the time, we are able to make a good decision when we work on it together. Occasionally, you and your family may find it hard to agree on a decision. If the decision involves BICR services, BICR is required to listen to the person who has the legal right to make the decision. If you are capable, that person is you. If you are not, your substitute decision-maker will have the authority to make the decision.

### **HOW ARE FAMILIES AFFECTED BY BRAIN INJURY?**

Families are very different in how they cope with and adapt to brain injury. It depends on so many different factors, including the type of relationship they have with you and how you were affected by your injury. Your family may experience some of the same feelings that you have experienced since your brain injury, such as loss and sadness that things are not the same as they used to be. They may worry about you and hope that you will be okay. Like you, they may be interested in learning all they can about your brain injury. This

information helps them understand what you are going through and how they can best support you.

### **HOW WILL BICR SUPPORT MY FAMILY?**

BICR employees are sensitive to the needs and experiences of families, and will work with families in a supportive way.

## **BICR COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

BICR works hard to provide the best possible service and always strives to improve. You can help us do that by letting BICR know how you are feeling about your support.

### **TALK TO ANY STAFF MEMBER**

BICR requires its staff to respect your rights and treat you with dignity. If you feel that you are not being treated respectfully, or if you have questions or concerns about your support, please talk to a staff member. Often the best place to start is to speak directly with your Case Facilitator or another front-line worker that you feel comfortable talking with. You may also speak with another representative of BICR, such as a Manager, Team Coordinator, Psychologist or Social Worker. All staff members have a responsibility to report your concerns to their supervisors so you know your concerns will be heard. Your main BICR contact people are listed on your “MY SUPPORT TEAM-CONTACT SHEET”.

### **YOUR CONCERNS MAY BE BROUGHT TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)**

If you are not satisfied with the way your questions or concerns have been addressed so far, you may bring your concern to the CEO, Frank Greco. Frank can be reached at 905-687-6788 ext. 624 or by e-mail at [fgreco@bicr.org](mailto:fgreco@bicr.org). You can also write him a letter addressed to 3340 Schmon Parkway, Unit 2, Thorold ON L2V 4Y6.

### **YOUR CONCERN MAY BE BROUGHT TO THE BICR BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

BICR has a Board of Directors, which is made up of volunteer community members. If you are not satisfied with the CEO’s response, you may lodge your complaint with the chairperson of the BICR Board of Directors. They can be contacted in writing at 3340 Schmon Parkway, Unit 2, Thorold ON L2V 4Y6.

**THE HEALTH SERVICES APPEAL AND REVIEW BOARD (HSARB)**

If you are still not satisfied after receiving a response from the BICR Board of Directors, you have a legal right to take your complaint to the HSARB. The HSARB is an independent body made up of members of the general public. For general information on the appeal process, you can contact the HSARB at 416-327-8512 or visit their website at [www.hsarb.on.ca](http://www.hsarb.on.ca). To start the appeal process, you must write to the HSARB and ask for a hearing. The HSARB will tell you when your hearing is scheduled and what you need to do to prepare. After the hearing, the HSARB will send you a letter about its decision.

**WILL ANYTHING NEGATIVE HAPPEN TO ME IF I COMPLAIN?**

No. The Bill of Rights states that you have the right to raise concerns or recommend changes about your services. BICR takes all complaints very seriously.

## **CHALLENGING SUPPORT ISSUES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many BICR participants face support issues that can be complicated and sensitive, such as those that will be discussed in this section.

The issues described in this section include:

Mental Health and Addictions

Sexuality

Infectious Diseases

Influenza and Pandemic Planning

Physical Supports

Falls Prevention Strategy

### **MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS**

BICR recognizes that brain injuries are complex and may include challenges with mental health and addictions. We are able to provide support within the agency through social work and psychology departments. We will work your family doctor or specialist to ensure your mental health needs are being addressed. In the event that more specialized support is required, referrals to community mental health and addictions partners can be made.

The misuse of drugs and alcohol can get in the way of you progressing toward your goals and can increase your risk for injury. For example, using alcohol or drugs may increase the likelihood of seizures, falls, and further brain injuries.

#### **BICR PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING SUPPORT FOR CLIENTS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTIES WITH SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL HEALTH:**

Supportive counseling.

Behavioural contracting to discourage substance misuse.

BICR will facilitate referrals to other community agencies who provide support to people with addictions. (ex. CASON, CMHA, NRMH, etc.)

## SEXUALITY

Sexuality is a normal, healthy part of an adult's life. However, this can be a very challenging issue for participants and families following a brain injury. BICR understands that sexuality issues tend to be sensitive and staff will provide support in a confidential and non-judgemental way. Whether you are in a relationship or not, adults do not generally choose to discuss issues regarding their sexuality with their parents or other family members. However, after a brain injury, families may become more concerned about sexual decisions. Families can know that BICR will support participants, as needed, in making responsible decisions involving their sexuality.

### **AS A BICR PARTICIPANT, YOU HAVE THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS REGARDING SEXUALITY:**

- The right to have your sexual identity accepted and understood.
- The right to engage in sexual relationships and intimacy, if both persons are over the age of consent.
- The right to privacy and confidentiality in all aspects of your life, including personal relationships.
- The right not to be judged because of your sexuality.
- The right to be free from unwanted sexual attention and to terminate a sexual relationship, if desired, at any time.

### **YOU ALSO HAVE SOME RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN IT COMES TO SEXUALITY:**

- Respect that others may see sexual issues differently than you do.
- Respect the privacy of others and maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Share responsibility for maintaining yours and your partner's sexual health and well-being.

### **BICR CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT TO YOU BY:**

Supporting you in making choices that will safeguard your health, safety and emotional well-being.

Helping you get the information and counselling you need about safer sex practices, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, and other sexual issues.

## INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Infectious diseases can spread in a variety of ways: through the air, from direct or indirect contact with another person, soiled objects, skin or mucous membrane, saliva, urine, blood and body secretions, through sexual contact, and through contaminated food and water. Some examples are Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS.

### WHAT IF I HAVE AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE?

Your doctor has a legal duty to report your disease to the Public Health Department. A Public Health officer may contact you to determine if anything needs to be done to protect you and others around you.

Confidentiality is important and all participants are entitled to services regardless of what disease they might have or how they acquired it. BICR's priority is keeping everyone safe while balancing the need to protect your privacy. In order to put protection protocols in place for the staff who work with you, it is vital that you inform BICR about your disease. In most cases, BICR will be able to keep information about your disease confidential however there are some situations in which BICR must inform your staff team. In these instances, we will discuss this with you. For example, if you live in a BICR residential setting, the staff who work with you may need to be informed.

### WHAT IF I'M CONCERNED ABOUT BEING EXPOSED TO INFECTIOUS DISEASES?

Talk to BICR staff about infectious diseases and decrease your risk of infecting yourself or others:

**Wash your hands often.** This is especially important before and after preparing food, before eating and after using the toilet.

**Get vaccinated.** Ask your doctor about getting available immunization shots (e.g. for Hepatitis A and B).

**Stay at home if you feel unwell.** Don't go out if you're vomiting, have diarrhea or are running a fever.

**Be smart about food preparation.** Keep counters and other kitchen surfaces clean when preparing meals. In addition, promptly refrigerate leftovers.

**Practice safer sex.** Use condoms. Get tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

**Don't share personal items.** Use your own toothbrush, comb or razor blade. Avoid sharing drinking glasses or dining utensils.



## **INFLUENZA AND PANDEMIC PLANNING**

An influenza (flu) pandemic spreads easily through many countries and regions of the world. Since the pandemic flu spreads the same way as seasonal flu—through droplets contained in sneezes, coughs and by hand contact—basic precautions can greatly reduce its spread. Vaccines are one of the ways that we can control the spread of viruses.

### **KNOW THAT BRAIN INJURY COMMUNITY RE-ENTRY IS PREPARED AND HAS A PANDEMIC PLAN.**

All staff at BICR complete training and are educated on what to do if there is a pandemic flu outbreak. Staff will continue to follow routine practices to ensure minimal risk of spreading any virus. Staff will be required to wear personal protective equipment when providing direct care to a participant. This includes wearing gloves, gowns, masks and eye protection. In the case of a flu pandemic BICR may have a limited number of staff who are available to work and this may have an impact on participant programming. During a pandemic, depending on the severity of the outbreak BICR may have to cancel group events and may need to limit services to only those that are classified as essential. During a pandemic BICR will continue to update you and your families with regards to information on what to do. The following is a list outlining ways to reduce your risk.

### **HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY FROM A FLU PANDEMIC**

- Get your flu shot every year - the flu shot will not protect you from a pandemic flu virus, but it will protect you from getting ordinary flu, which could weaken your immune system or resistance to the pandemic flu.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and often with soap or alcohol based hand sanitizers, good hand hygiene is the best way to prevent the spread of all flu viruses.
- Keep an alcohol-based sanitizer (gel) handy at work, in your purse, at school, home and in your car.
- Cover your mouth when you cough. Try to use a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid large crowds of people where viruses can spread easily.
- Reduce non-essential travel.
- Follow any instructions given by public health officials.□

## **PHYSICAL SUPPORT**

Many people experience physical challenges after brain injury, such as weakness or paralysis, poor balance and reduced ability to move independently. In fact, you may need to use a wheel-chair, walker, cane or other adaptive aid to help you get around and complete your daily activities more safely.

### **WHAT GUIDELINES DO BICR WORKERS FOLLOW IN PROVIDING PHYSICAL SUPPORT?**

BICR strives to provide physical support in a way that minimizes the chance that you or BICR employees will get hurt. To ensure the safety of all involved, BICR workers will only provide physical support that has been designed by a qualified professional. If you require physical support, we may ask that you complete an assessment with an occupational or physical therapist during your initial assessment period to ensure that the physical support is safe for you. BICR may require the assessment before any support is provided if there are significant concerns. If support needs change, BICR may ask for a new assessment.

### **ARE THERE ANY LIMITS ON THE PHYSICAL SUPPORT THAT BICR WILL PROVIDE?**

While BICR employees will work hard to find the best ways to support you, BICR reserves the right to refuse to provide physical support during an activity if the staff member believes that it presents a risk to you or to the staff member providing the support. BICR will make every effort to find other ways to meet your physical needs for your essential daily activities. However, physical support for participation in optional recreational or vocational activities may be discontinued if the activity is felt to be unsafe for you or BICR staff.

## **FALLS PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

Falls are not just about getting older. A fall can cause minor or serious injury. Even without an injury a fall can cause a loss of confidence, increase fear and/or decrease activity level that may lead to a decline in one's health and increase the possibility of future falls. Most falls are predictable and preventable. There can be many factors that contribute to a fall; becoming aware of these factors can foster a culture of safety for participants and staff and reduce the number of falls. BICR assesses each new participant coming into service with respect to falls risk. If a risk is identified, we will work with you and your family to reduce these risks.

## STATEMENT OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

### How we protect your Privacy

At Brain Injury Community Re-Entry (Niagara) Inc. (BICR), we treat your personal health information with respect and sensitivity in accordance with the Ontario *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004* (PHIPA) and any other laws that we are required to follow. We take steps to safeguard your personal health information from theft, loss and unauthorized access, copying, modification, use, disclosure and disposal. We perform audits to monitor and manage our privacy compliance. We take steps to ensure that our staff and everyone who performs services for us protects your privacy.

### Collection of personal health information

We collect personal health information about you directly from you or the person acting on your behalf. The personal health information that we collect may include your name, date of birth, address, health history, medication history, allergies, and other information necessary for your care.

Occasionally we collect personal health information about you from other sources if we have obtained your consent to do so or if the law permits.

### Use and disclosures of personal health information

We use and disclose your personal health information, to:

- Support your health care when we are providing health care services, such as rehabilitation support and counselling
- Communicate or consult about your health care with other health care providers when we are providing health care services to you, which could include for example: assessments, counsellor notes, medications, allergies, etc., including from electronic medical information systems. (If you would like more information about the electronic medical information systems, please speak with a staff member or our Privacy Officer.)
- Update you of upcoming events, activities and programs
- Deliver and evaluate our programs and compile statistics
- Plan, administer and manage our internal operations
- Be paid or process, monitor, verify or reimburse claims for payment including from OHIP and WSIB
- Conduct risk management, error management and quality improvement activities
- Educate our staff and students

- **Do fundraising**
- **Conduct research (subject to certain rules)**
- **Comply with legal and regulatory requirements**
- **Fulfill other purposes permitted or required by law**

**Your choices**

**You may access and/or request that correction be made to your records of personal health information, or withdraw your consent for some of the above uses and disclosures (subject to certain legal obligations) by contacting our Privacy Officer.**

## **BICR PRIVACY POLICY**

### **Commitment to Privacy**

Protecting your privacy and the confidentiality of your personal information has always been an important aspect of Brain Injury Community Re-entry's operations. The appropriate collection, use and disclosure of participants' personal health information is fundamental to our day to day operations and to your care.

We strive to provide you with excellent medical care and service, which includes developing appropriate services and treating your personal health information with respect. Each member and employee of our organization must abide by our commitment to privacy in handling of personal information.

### **Applicability of Privacy Policy**

Our privacy policy informs you of our commitment to privacy and tells you the ways we ensure that your privacy is protected. Our privacy policy applies to protect the personal health information of all our participants that is in our possession and control.

### **What is Personal Health Information?**

Personal health information means identifying information about an individual relating to their physical or mental health (including medical history), the providing of health care to the individual, payments or eligibility for health care, organ and tissue donation and health number.

Your health record includes information about your health including your date of birth, contact information, health number, health history, family health history, details of your physical and mental health, record of your visits, notes from care, assessments, counseling and treatment, any other care and support you received, results from assessments, information from other health care providers and the name of your substitute decision-maker if you are not able to make your own decisions.

The information in your health record belongs to you, but the health record itself is the property of Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc.

### **The 10 Principles of Privacy**

Our Privacy Policy reflects our compliance with fair information practices, applicable laws and standards of practice.

## **1. Accountability**

We take our commitment to securing your privacy very seriously. Each employee and member of our organization is responsible for the personal information under his/her control. Our employees are informed about the importance of privacy and receive information periodically to update them about our Privacy Policy and related issues.

In addition to establishing this Privacy Policy we have appointed Heather Olszewski, Privacy Officer, for privacy matters.

## **2. Identifying Purposes: Why We Collect Information**

We ask you for information to establish a relationship and serve your medical needs. We obtain most of our information about you directly from you, or from other health practitioners whom you have seen and authorized to disclose to us. You are entitled to know how we use your information and this is described in the Privacy Statement posted. We will limit the information we collect to what we need for those purposes, and we will use it only for those purposes. We will obtain your consent if we wish to use your information for any other purpose.

We collect, use and disclose (meaning share) your health information to:

- Treat and care for you (including for example assessments, support and counselling) . Provide appointment reminders to you
- Update you of upcoming events, activities and programs
- Deliver and evaluate our programs
- Plan, administer and manage our internal operations
- Be paid or process, monitor, verify or reimburse claims for payment
- Conduct risk management, error management and quality improvement activities
- Educate our staff and students
- Dispose of your information
- Seek your consent (or consent of a substitute decision maker) where appropriate . Do fundraising
- Respond to or initiate legal proceedings
- Conduct research (subject to certain rules)
- Compile statistics

- Allow for the analysis, administration and management of the health system
- Comply with legal and regulatory requirements
- Fulfill other purposes permitted or required by law

Our collection, use and disclosure (sharing) of your personal health information must follow the law.

### **3. Consent**

You have a right to make choices and control how your health information is collected, used, and disclosed, subject to some limits.

There is no magic age when you become able to make your own decisions about your health information. You may be capable of making some decisions and not others. If you are not capable — you will have a substitute decision-maker (often a family member) who will make your information decisions for you. Who can act as a substitute decision-maker and what they have to do is also set out in law.

We assume that when you come to have health care from us, you have given us your permission (your consent) to use your information, unless you tell us otherwise. We may also collect, use and share your health information in order to talk with other health care providers about your care unless you tell us you do not want us to do so.

You have the right to ask that we not share some or all of your health record with one or more of our staff members or ask us not to share your health record with one or more of your external health care providers (such as a specialist). This is known as asking for a "lockbox". If you would like to know more, please ask us for a copy of our "Lockbox Information Brochure: How to Restrict Access to your Health Record".

There are other cases where we are not allowed to assume we have your permission to share information. We may need permission to communicate with any family members or friends with whom you would like us to share information about your health (unless someone is your substitute decision maker). For example, we will need your permission to give your health information to an insurance company. We will explain this to you.



When we require and ask for your permission, you may choose to say no. If you say yes, you may change your mind at any time. Once you say no, we will no longer share your information unless you say so. Your choice to say no may be subject to some limits.

**BUT** there are cases where we may collect, use or share your health information without your permission, as permitted or required by law. For example, we do not require your permission to use your information for billing, risk management or error management, quality improvement purposes; or to share personal health information in a number of permitted or required circumstances, including to keep you or someone else safe (it's called to eliminate or reduce a significant risk of serious bodily harm); or to meet reporting obligations under other laws such as for child protection.

#### **4. Limiting Collection**

We collect information by fair and lawful means and collect only that information which may be necessary for purposes related to the provision of services related to your medical needs.

#### **5. Limiting Use, Disclosure and Retention**

The information we request from you is used and disclosed for the purposes defined. We will seek your consent before using the information for purposes beyond the scope of the posted Privacy Statement.

Under no circumstances do we sell participant lists or other personal information to third parties. There are some types of disclosure of your personal health information that may occur as part of our services and our routine obligations and/or administration management. This includes consultants and suppliers to the organization, on the understanding that they abide by our Privacy Policy and only to the extent necessary to allow them to provide services that support our organization.

We will retain your information only for the time it is required for the purposes we describe and once your personal information is no longer required, it will be securely destroyed. However, in order to meet legal requirements and for our business purposes, including if there is exposure to potential claims, some information is kept for a longer period.

## **6. Accuracy**

We endeavour to ensure that all decisions involving your personal information are based upon accurate and timely information. While we will do our best to base our decisions on accurate information, we rely on you to disclose all material information and to inform us of any relevant changes.

## **7. Safeguards: Protecting Your Information**

We protect your information with appropriate safeguards and security measures. BICR maintains personal information in a combination of paper and electronic files. Recent paper records concerning individuals' personal information are stored in files kept onsite at our office. Older files/records may be stored offsite.

Everyone on our team is bound by confidentiality. We have to protect your information from loss or theft and make sure no one looks at it or does something with your information if they are not involved with your care or allowed as part of their job. Access to personal information will be authorized only for the physicians and employees associated with BICR, and other agents who require access in the performance of their duties and to those otherwise authorized by law.

We provide information to health care providers acting on your behalf, on the understanding that they are also bound by law and ethics to safeguard your privacy. Other organizations and agents must agree to abide by our Privacy Policy and may be asked to sign contracts to that effect. We will give them only the information necessary to perform the services for which they are engaged, and will require that they not store, use or disclose the information for purposes other than to carry out those services.

Our computer systems are password-secured and constructed in such a way that only authorized individuals can access secure systems and databases.

If you send us an e-mail message that includes personal information, such as your name included in the "address", we will use that information to respond to your inquiry. Please remember that e-mail is not necessarily secure against interception. If your communication is very

sensitive, you should not send it electronically unless the e-mail is encrypted or your browser indicates that the access is secure.

## **8. Openness: Keeping You Informed**

BICR has utilized this plain language Privacy Policy to keep you informed. You may ask to receive a copy of it from Heather Olszewski, Privacy Officer.

If you have any additional questions or concerns about privacy, we invite you to contact us and we will address your concerns to the best of our ability.

## **9. Access and Correction**

With limited exceptions, we will give you access to the information we retain about you within a reasonable time, upon presentation of a written request and satisfactory identification.

We may charge you a fee for this service and if so, we will give you notice in advance of processing your request.

If you find errors of fact in your personal health information, please notify us as soon as possible and we will make the appropriate corrections. We are not required to correct information relating to clinical observations or opinions made in good faith. You have a right to append a short statement of disagreement to your record if we refuse to make a requested change.

If we deny your request for access to your personal information, we will advise you in writing of the reason for the refusal and you may then challenge our decision.

## **10. Challenging Compliance**

We encourage you to contact us with any questions or concerns you might have about your privacy or our Privacy Policy. We will investigate and respond to your concerns about any aspect of our handling of your information.

In most cases, an issue is resolved simply by telling us about it and discussing it. You can reach us at:

**Brain Injury Community Re-Entry (Niagara) Inc.  
3340 Schmon Parkway, Unit 2**

**Thorold, Ontario, L2V 4Y6**

**Tel: 905-687-6788 or 1-800-996-8796**

**Fax: 905-641-2785**

**E-mail: [holszewski@bicr.org](mailto:holszewski@bicr.org)**

**Website: [www.bicr.org](http://www.bicr.org)**

**Contact person: Heather Olszewski, Privacy Officer**

**Extension 663**

**If after contacting us, you feel that your concerns have not been addressed to your satisfaction, we will provide information on other complaint procedures that may be available to you.**

### **Conclusion**

**Any changes to our Privacy Policy shall be acknowledged in this Privacy Policy in a timely manner. You may see when this Code was last updated by referring to the modification date found at the bottom of the page.**

**Dated: December 2017**

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Brain Injury Community Re-entry**

**(Niagara) Inc.**

**3340 Schmon Parkway, Unit 2**

**Thorold, ON L2V 4Y6**

**Phone: 905 687-6788 or 1-800-996-8796**

**Fax: 905 641-2785**

**Website: [www.bicr.org](http://www.bicr.org)**

**Email: [staff@bicr.org](mailto:staff@bicr.org)**