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Choosing a Rehabilitation Center

After a Spinal Cord Injury



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Choosing a Rehabilitation Center after a Spinal Cord Injury

It is in your best interest to find a rehabilitation center that has the personnel and resources to give you the strongest chance for recovery. Please keep in mind that rehabilitation centers come in many sizes and have different approaches towards treatment. This is not a decision that should be rushed, no matter how anxious you are to begin rehabilitation for yourself or for a loved one.

The mission of successful rehabilitation facilities is to help people return to activities that they enjoyed before. While there is no cure for paraplegia, intense rehabilitation is the best hope for recovery and improved health. Through physical therapy, counseling, and education, these rehabilitation programs help spinal cord injury survivors regain confidence and function.

Whether you are pursuing in-patient or out-patient rehabilitation, don't be afraid to ask questions. Here are a few points to consider as you research potential care facilities for your spinal cord injury:

1. *Is the facility accredited?*

Unlike a rehabilitation license, accreditation is strictly voluntary. However, centers carry these "seals of approval" in an acknowledgement of superior facilities and service. Two of the most widely regarded accreditations come from the "Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations" (JCAHO) and "The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities" (CARF).

2. *Does the facility specialize in spinal cord injuries?*

This is one of the most important questions to ask. Just because a program advertises physical rehabilitation, does not mean they are well equipped to do so. A rehabilitation facility specializing in spinal cord injuries is more likely to the equipment and medical specialists that you need.

3. *Is there a physician present at all times?*

Believe it or not, there is no rule requiring a rehabilitation center to maintain physicians 24 hours a day. Be sure to inquire if there is a physician on-site at all times. Spinal cord injuries often come with many health complications. A physician on hand can immediately respond to changes in your health.

4. Are the nurses qualified to treat spinal cord injury patients?

Nurses with appropriate experience and education can greatly help your rehabilitation. In fact, they are important members of your treatment team. Don't be afraid to ask for more information about specialized training. For spinal cord injury patients, a nurse with certification in respiratory therapy (Tracheostomy, BiPAP, CPA, etc.) can be an incredible asset.

5. What is the nurse to patient ratio during each shift?

A spinal cord injury patient will have significant interaction with the nursing staff. They assist the physicians, are responsible for distributing medication, and implement some of the physical activities. When you have devoted attention from nurses, you are ensuring that you have one of the strongest tools for recovery.

6. Does the facility have any optional activities?

Stimulating activities are vital to mental and physical recuperation, especially for in-patients. This can include aquatic activities, outdoor activities, and even gardening. Make sure you scope out how accessible these are for movement limitations.

7. Does the rehabilitation facility offer a multi-faceted approach?

Strong rehabilitation for a spinal cord injury is done on many levels. Physical and mental recuperation are equally important. Ask about the facility's program for physical therapy, occupational therapy, cognitive therapy, speech therapy, and related rehabilitation. Additional support services and patient education can also be a great asset towards recovery.

8. Are there other specialists available if needed?

The most important part of recovery is receiving the care that is needed. Some rehabilitation facilities maintain an active staff of specialists or physicians. If your prospective rehabilitation center does not have a specialist you require on staff, ask if they are available if needed. Depending on where this facility is located, you should inquire about transportation to these specialists.

9. Does the program involve your family and loved ones?

Family and friends can play an important part in your rehabilitation. Some programs include education or counseling for your loved ones, so they can properly assist you once you return home. These people can also become incredible assets as you improve in health and re-adjust to daily activities.

10. What is the reputation of the rehabilitation program?

While technology is improving, there is no rehabilitation program that can promise a complete recovery. Instead, ask about their success in returning patients to an active lifestyle. This can include learning how to adapt to loss of certain functions and using assistive devices.

There is no such thing as too many questions. The staff at rehabilitation centers should understand how difficult a spinal cord injury can be for all involved. You owe it to yourself, your friends, and your loved ones to seek out the best possible rehabilitation program.

If you have questions about how to locate a reputable rehabilitation center, do not hesitate to contact us toll-free at 1-866-523-1603 or visit www.spinalcordinjurylawyer.org. The Ammons law firm has almost 2 decades of experience in spinal cord injury law. Throughout the years, we have developed a strong network of specialized physicians and care providers. If we cannot answer your question, we can connect you with a specialist who can.