Home, Sweet [New] Home

Take the stress out of moving and settling into a new neighborhood—with HIV.

June 1, 2009 By Kat Noel

As if packing and loading your worldly possessions into a moving truck and remembering to forward your mail aren't stressful enough, moving to a new location if you're HIV positive means you'll add a few extra things on your "to-do" list. These few tips will make for a smooth move.

CONFIRM YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE. Contact your health insurance provider to ensure that it will continue to cover you in your new state. If you benefit from an AIDS drug assistance program (ADAP), compare the qualifications and conditions between the state you're moving to and the one you're in.

According to the "2009 National ADAP Monitoring Project Report" three states—Montana, Nebraska and Indiana—were forced to create drug waiting lists during fiscal year 2008 because of an inability to meet client demand. For information on your state's ADAP, visit statehealthfacts.org.

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH A NEW DOCTOR. Since treatment adherence is vital, it's important to find a doctor who specializes in the care of positive people. "Use your current doctor as a resource," advises Joshua Brown, the director of client services at New Hampshire–based AIDS Response Seacoast. "Usually they can assist you with finding care in another area." Also be sure to make an appointment with your new doctor, refill your prescription and pack a one- to two-month supply of any medication before your move. In addition, pack your meds in a separate box from everything else so that they are easily accessible—and take them with you so they don't get lost in transit.

KEEP EXTRA COPIES OF YOUR MEDICAL RECORDS HANDY. Though your new doctor may have experience with HIV treatment, this will be his or her first time providing you with care, so it's important that the doc is aware of your specific medical history and needs.

"This helps facilitate you getting your meds quicker and keeps you from being in limbo when it comes to your treatment," Brown says.

FIND A LOCAL ASO. Discovering all the services that an area offers can be overwhelming. No worries; *POZ* makes it easy with our comprehensive AIDS Services Directory, listing more than

1,000 ASOs nationwide. Visit directory.poz.com and type in your new home's zip code. You'll find information on various local organizations, services and centers.

KNOW YOUR STATE'S HIV CRIMINALIZATION AND DISCLOSURE LAWS. Become familiar with your new state government's criminal statutes on HIV transmission and exposure. In addition, protect your privacy by researching your new state's HIV confidentiality laws. To learn about criminalization laws throughout the United States, visit the Netherlands-based Global Criminalisation Scan (gnpplus.net/criminalisation) and select a state.

DECIDE IF AND HOW IT'S BEST TO DISCLOSE YOUR STATUS. Deciding to tell the new people in your life—such as your new neighbors—about your HIV status is a big decision. Disclose only when you are comfortable. Remember the five Ws of sharing your status—Whom should you tell? What will you tell them, and what are you expecting from them once they know? When is the right time for you to share? Where is the best place to have this conversation? Why are you telling them? For more on HIV disclosure, visit aidsmeds.com/disclosure.

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