



## Families & Networks of Support: “We’re All Family”

This video includes the voices of the friends and families of people living with HIV, from initial reactions to the diagnosis to navigating the health care system and assisting loved ones as they adjust to life with a serious, long term illness. People living with HIV, Long Term Care (LTC) providers, a family therapist and HIV health care professionals join the conversation to discuss the challenges families face, how to build a network of support and the vital role of friends and family members in the circle of care.

### Building networks of support

- The potential stigma of living with HIV can mean that an individual may be isolated from family and other social networks. Alongside providing medical support, LTC staff and other care providers often provide emotional support.
- Encouraging recreation therapy, peer support and social interactions, while recognizing personal goals and preferences, are all part of caring for a client as an individual.
- A person living with HIV can live safely and comfortably in a variety of environments, including a LTC home. The **Bedside Care** video provides more information on the use of universal precautions and infection prevention for all clients in care, including people living with HIV.
- There are multiple resources available to help someone with HIV, as well as their friends, families and care providers, create strong networks of support. A good way to start is by contacting one of the many AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) across Canada (see link below).
- It takes a community to support someone living and aging with HIV.

### Caring for the care provider

- Having a loved one diagnosed with a serious, long term illness such as HIV can mean significant change in the life of family members, as well as the client themselves. This is also true of when a loved one transitions into LTC.
- Part of providing optimal client-centred care means that family and loved ones are included as part of the care team, and that their needs and concerns are taken into consideration.
- Friends and family members of people living with HIV may benefit from additional support and resources, both at the time of diagnosis or as the illness progresses.

### Sources and links

[www.HIV411.ca](http://www.HIV411.ca) is a web portal that connects people living with HIV and their care providers to resources for counselling, clinics and additional information on HIV across Canada. It is a great first step for accessing resources in your area.