The Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado is the go-to resource for help and services for survivors of an injury to the brain, their families, and providers.

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15 Tips For Surviving—and Enjoying—the Holidays with a Brain Injury

Flashing lights. Crowded stores. Loud family gatherings. The holiday season should be joyful, but it can often be overwhelming to someone who is living with traumatic brain injury.

If you are living with a brain injury, share these tips with your friends and family. If someone you love is living with a brain injury, the tips below can help you plan in advance to make the holiday season happier and more relaxed for all of your friends and family.

1. Identify — in advance, if possible — a quiet place to go at gatherings if you are feeling overwhelmed. This gives you a chance to take a break, and lets your loved ones stay involved in the festivities.

2. Avoid crowded stores and order gifts online instead.

3. If you are shopping in stores, remember to make a list in advance and plan your trips on week days — either early in the morning or late at night when there are fewer crowds.

4. Wear a cap with a brim or lightly tinted sunglasses to minimize the glare of bright lights in stores or flashing lights on a tree.

5. Wear noise-reducing headphones or ear buds. These are also great gift ideas for loved ones with a brain injury if they don’t already have them.

6. Ask a friend to go with you to stores or holiday parties. They can help you navigate crowds and anxiety-producing situations.

7. Plan in advance as much as possible. And ask your hosts what their plans are so you aren’t surprised by anything.

8. Volunteer to help with the holiday activities that you enjoy the most and are least stressful for you.

9. Remember to ask for help and accept help if it is offered to you.

10. Ask someone you trust to help you with a budget to avoid overspending on gifts.

11. Take a nap if you need a break.

12. Remember that it’s okay to skip the big parties and plan to celebrate in a way that makes you comfortable and happy.

13. Check in advance to see if fireworks are part of outdoor celebrations — and skip them if they make you uncomfortable.

14. If flashing lights bother you, ask your friends and family to turn off the flashing feature on Christmas tree lights or other decorations when you visit their homes.

15. You can let your host know in advance that you may need to leave early. It will help you feel comfortable if you need to get home or to a quiet place and it can also help avoid any hurt feelings.

Source: Brainline.org/Article/15-Tips-Surviving-And-Enjoying-Holidays-Tbi
Who We Are

The Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado is the go-to resource for help and services for survivors of an injury to the brain, their families, and providers.

What We Do

Client Programs
- Case Management
- Recreation Programs
- Therapeutic Music and Art Classes
- Emergency Utility Bill Assistance
- Seminars, Classes, and Workshops
- Support Groups
- Online Resource Directory
- Education Support

Professional Programs
- Brain Injury Professional Networks
- Community Outreach and Education

Other Programs & Fundraisers
- Public Policy
- Quarterly Newsletters
- Reinhardt/Bruno Golf Tournament

Pikes Peak Challenge
You Took the Challenge! Thank You!

On September 9, 2017, a record number of supporters like you gathered together to walk, roll, stroll or hike in support of the over 500,000 individuals living in Colorado with an injury to the brain.

Fundraising efforts also broke new records at an exciting $200,000 and we continue to see donations coming in!

For over 30 years, the Pikes Peak Challenge has been the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado’s flagship fundraising event. By participating in or by supporting the event, the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado is able to continue to be the go-to resource for help and services for survivors of an injury to the brain, their families and providers.

We hope that your sore muscles and blisters are healing as you celebrate your accomplishments and we look forward to having you back next year to do it all again.

On behalf of the board, staff, and individuals we serve, thank you!

BIAC Update

Case Management program, Fiscal Year-end review

Top 5 goal categories addressed in Case Management (statewide):

- 1: Financial
- 2: Physical Health
- 3-5 (tie): Health Insurance/Long Term Care, Housing, Transportation

Number of Clients Served in Case Management during FY17 (7/1/16 - 6/30/17):

- Total: 1,010
- Denver Metro: 725
- Southern: 114
- Northern: 106
- Western/Mountain: 65

Policy Update

The 2018 legislative session will start on January 10th. This is when legislators meet, debate and vote on over 600 new bills introduced by Republicans and Democrats from all over Colorado. Watching all these bills, particularly ones that may impact the Colorado brain injury community, can be a daunting task, which is why BIAC partners with August Policy Strategies that monitors bills on our behalf. They alert BIAC if any bills are introduced that would hurt access to supports, and if necessary, August Policy Strategies will work to improve or even kill the bill.

All survivors in Colorado should know that BIAC watches potential legislation very carefully. If you have questions about our policy work please email Gavin@BIAColorado.org
Company Profile

HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital

HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Colorado Springs is a 64-bed inpatient rehabilitation hospital that offers comprehensive inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation services designed to return patients to leading active and independent lives.

Our hospital provides a wide range of physical rehabilitation services, a vast network of highly skilled, independent private practice physicians and HealthSouth therapists and nurses, and the most innovative equipment and rehabilitation technology, ensuring that all patients have access to the highest quality care. Designed with our patient’s care in mind, HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Colorado Springs offers 31 semi-private and private rooms with televisions, telephones and wireless internet capabilities.

In addition to caring for general rehabilitation diagnoses such as orthopedics, cardiac, and pulmonary, HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Colorado Springs has specialized inpatient programs for stroke, MS, Parkinson’s, developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injuries. We also have a home admission program where individuals who are failing or unsafe at home can be admitted to work on balance, gait, and activities of daily living that will allow them to be successful at home.

This 84,000 square-foot hospital serves patients throughout southern Colorado and is located at 325 Parkside Drive, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 80910. We encourage families to come visit our hospital and take a tour prior to any planned hospitalization.

In addition to inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation, HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Colorado Springs also offers a variety of support groups including; Caregiver Support Group, Stroke Support Group, Neurological Disorder Support Group, and an Amputee Support Group. For more information about any of our programs please call (719) 630-8000 or visit us at HealthSouthColoradoSprings.com.

Resource Highlight

Learn about resources that BIAC Case Managers and other staff find valuable while helping survivors and families.

I’ll Carry the Fork!  
Recovering a Life After Brain Injury  
By Kara Swanson
I am an “appaholic.” I am addicted to apps, I freely admit it, as over the past 6-7 years I have researched and demoed scores of apps on my iPad and iPhone that would assist my husband, Jim and daughter, Kara to achieve as much self-determination as possible in day to day living. Both have challenges with organization and scheduling due to brain trauma—my daughter from a severe TBI, and my husband due to complications from a benign brain tumor.

In the course of this work, I have come up with a list of personal favorites and hints and tidbits to share with others as I teach about the power of technology to transform lives.

Because of technology, Kara (who is unable to tell time, knows sight words only, needs maximum support with finances, is (L) hemiplegic, and has a 50% vision loss) lives on her own with support 4-6 hours a day, and that is mainly to help her to access community activities and events. Jim considers his iPhone to be his brain in his pocket as he manages his day.

For many, getting started with technology or even knowing the questions to ask can be daunting. “Do I need an iPad or iPhone, and what are the best apps?” “How do I find the time to learn about what might help?”

First of all, we do utilize iPads and iPhones. However, there are many others who swear by Android products and Google Play apps. Most of the apps I will discuss are found in the Apple App store only. However, do not let that frustrate you as you can search within Google Play for comparable apps.

As you are getting started with technology with a smartphone or tablet, take a look at the “Native Apps,” meaning the apps that come with the device.

Technology can mean the difference between independence or dependence. There is a learning curve, start small and maybe just utilize one or two apps until you are comfortable with the device. But you can do it — it was life changing for all of us!!!

Think about using iCloud and shared calendars and reminders for remote support - I can enter something on my Calendar or Reminders and it will appear on Jim’s iPhone.

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**Native iPhone Apps**

**Calendar**
- Set up sounds and a visual reminder on screen through Notification Center in Settings so you do not miss any events.
- Recurring events can be set - daily, weekly, or monthly
- Utilize to be reminded at certain intervals before the event.

**Reminders**
- Set up sounds and a visual reminder on the screen through Notification Center in Settings
- Comes up in a list format and can check off list when done!

**Notes**
- Jim lives by this! He takes notes all the time! He uses iCloud, so anything he puts on his Notes app on his iPhone is available on his iPad, too.

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**Tuesday 14**

**Use Siri:** Say “SIRI schedule...event, date, time.” Go into Calendar to make sure it is entered and customize, if needed.

**Reminders**
- Use Siri: Say “SIRI Remind me...event, date, time” - I always go back into Reminders just to make sure it is entered. With all of these you will utilize “Notifications” in Settings... Not difficult as you choose how you want to be notified about the Calendar or Reminder event.

**Notes**
- Use Siri: Ask “Siri, what can you do?” You will be amazed! And then utilize!
A Wildflower Assisted Living and Care Homes offers three locations that provide a life wonderful experience for those with traumatic brain injuries. We have 24 hour on-site staff and are RN owned and operated. We accept private pay, workman’s, Medicaid, and long-term care insurance.

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Interested in Advertising in HeadSTRONG?

Contact Gavin Attwood, CEO
303-562-3199 or Gavin@BIAColorado.org

Other Apps

Pictello
- This app allows us to create step-by-step picture and audio prompts for cooking and household tasks, complex care needs, or vocational assist. Create Categories!
- We created Microwave and Crockpot categories for Kara’s cooking, and added recipes underneath each category with step-by-step picture and audio instructions.

Reminders (Aida)
“Reminders lets you create reminders very easily and quickly. Recurring reminders are fully supported, and you can set hourly, daily, weekly, monthly and yearly reminders, or even days of the week or month. It also has a wake-up alarm with custom snooze time.”
- This app runs Kara’s life! She records her own voice to remind her what to do all day long! We can add music clips like 15-30 seconds of “Back in the Saddle Again” to remind her to get ready for therapeutic horseback riding. We just use sounds as her notification and her voice reminders go off all day long.

Day One
- Jim uses this for daily journaling to help him remember what he accomplished that day. You can add pictures, too, for memory support. GREAT app and easy to use, and it syncs across devices, so if he enters on iPad it appears on iPhone!

CareZone
- I utilize for all of us.
- Makes it simpler to take care of yourself and your family. Keep everything organized and easily coordinate with the people that matter to you.

$19.99, AssistiveWare.com/Product/Pictello

$1.99, AidaOrganizer.com

Day One
$3.99 (but can frequently find on sale), DayOneApp.com

Free, CareZone.com

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A Survivor’s Story

Kristy Baker

Unlike most days, this Thursday’s work was slower than normal, so I left my downtown office and rode my bike to Osteria Marcos at Larimer Square to meet a friend. After dinner, we jumped on the light rail. My friend got off on his stop and I continued on to Golden. Once the train came to a stop, I made my way onto the bike path and started my 4-mile journey home for the night.

Then on May 16, 2013 at 10:17 P.M. my life forever changed. While on the path, I noticed a couple walking in front of me, and I attempted to go around, but it was too late. I was thrown from my bike and landed on my head – without a helmet. The couple called 911 and I was taken to St. Anthony’s Hospital where they noticed I was bleeding from my head and ears; I was immediately rushed into brain surgery.

The hospital staff called my parents to notify them, and they were on a flight the next morning for Denver. When they arrived at the hospital the neurosurgeon explained that I was in a life-staking situation and I most likely wouldn’t survive; and if I did, it wouldn’t be a positive outcome.

I remained in a coma for three weeks. It was said that I would never be able to work again, live alone again, or even drive my car. I would also be transferred to Craig Hospital for rehabilitation for up to a year.

Once I awoke, I moved up to the seventh floor and begin my rehabilitation. The nursing staff explained that I would be there for 1-2 months, and I would have appointments with nurses and therapists four times a day for exercise and memory. The first week was a little challenging, but nothing I couldn’t overcome. My difficulty was primarily on reading and answering questions.

The following week was completely unexpected - I started answering the questions correctly! The nurses were completely alarmed that within a week I had made so much leeway. As days progressed, I frequently asked when I could go home. I was more than ecstatic to see a June 19th departure date finally written on the board in my room.

When I arrived home, it seemed strange. Imagine being in jail for five years and then heading home, that’s truthfully how I felt. Since I was so exhausted the first night, I went to bed and woke up the next morning extremely nauseous. This was unexpected since I didn’t feel sick in the hospital.

The following two weeks were more intense than my hospital stay as the PEG tube was causing much sickness. Unfortunately, the hospital won’t approve the PEG tube from being removed prior to 30 days, so I had to manage the sickness.

My body was also rejecting all the sodium that I was consuming. For this, I would return to St. Anthony’s emergency room every 5-7 days so they could increase the sodium in my body through a drip.

One particular night in the beginning of the following December, I woke up at about 2:30 AM with the feeling of the flu. It was a completely different feeling than the lack of
Support Group Spotlight
Summit County Brain Injury Support Groups

How and why were the Summit County - Frisco Brain Injury Support Groups created?
The two support groups were created in response to the overwhelming number of concussions and mTBIs we see in the community and the hospital. TBI is the #1 trauma diagnosis in Summit County and at St. Anthony Summit Medical Center. We have a high school and young adult support group and an adult support group that meet monthly, both independently and combined. Summit Medical Center and Avalanche Physical Therapy partner together to offer these groups to the community.

When and where do the groups meet?
Adult: 4th Thursday of every month, sometimes on the medical campus of the hospital, sometimes off campus depending on the activity or event planned for the group. Young Adult: Monthly, times and place vary according to activity. We communicate by email and phone to keep participants in the loop. Any interested participants should call the TBI program coordinator for the most up-to-date info: 970 668 6121.

What is the main goal for the members?
Our main goal is to foster a safe and comfortable environment for individuals recovering from a brain injury, along with family members and caregivers of brain injured people, to share their experiences, ideas, support each other, and build a sense of community.

Can you share one resource that is highly recommended in the support groups?
Avalanche Physical Therapy Neurological Rehab Program 360 Peak One Drive, #190, Frisco, CO, 970-668-0888. We have also had a great response to our ongoing Art Therapy Workshop and our BrainFood cooking class.

How can people get involved with these support groups?
Please call or email our TBI Program Coordinator at 970-668-6121 or jenniferkagan@centura.org. Or call our Support Group Leader Kim Ramey at 970-668-0888.
Upcoming Events and Classes

Music Classes

Every Thursday
10:00 - 11:30am
Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado
1325 S Colorado Blvd, B-300
Denver, CO 80222
Register: 720-907-1455 or Heather@BIAColorado.org

Brain Injury Basics

Monday, December 4, 2017
10:00 am - 11:30 am
Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado
1325 S Colorado Blvd, B-300
Denver, CO 80222
Monday, January 29, 2018
11:30am-1:30pm
Operation TBI Freedom, 565 Communication Circle, Ste 100,
Colorado Springs, CO 80905
Brain Injury Basics is designed for adults living with a brain injury.
This workshop will cover:
• Types of brain injury and brain anatomy
• Brain injury facts
• Symptoms of brain injury and symptom recognition
• Strategies and treatment options for living with a brain injury
Register: 720-907-1455 or Heather@BIAColorado.org

Needlework

January 16 and February 20
10:00 - 11:00am
Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado
1325 S Colorado Blvd, B-300
Denver, CO 80222
Work to refine your fine motor skills and challenge your brain in new ways through various forms of needlework.
Register: 720-907-1455 or Heather@BIAColorado.org

Colorado Symphony

Occasionally, BIAC has Colorado Symphony tickets to offer to clients in Case Management. Contact your Case Manager for more information!

Vinny Zecchino, Colorado Symphony,
Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue, 9.24.17

A Matter of Balance

Every Wednesday,
January 10 - February 28
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado
1325 S Colorado Blvd, B-300
Denver, CO 80222
An 8-week structured program designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase activity levels among adults aged 60 and older.
Register: 720-907-1455 or Heather@BIAColorado.org

Art Classes

Every 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month
10:00 - 11:30am
Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado
1325 S Colorado Blvd, B-300
Denver, CO 80222
Register: 720-907-1455 or Heather@BIAColorado.org

Winter Ski Outing - “Frozen Assets”

January 15 - 19
Instruction and equipment provided by the Adaptive Ski Program in Breckenridge. Staying at the Griffith Lodge. 2 ½ days Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, or boarding. Ice fishing and tubing at Copper Mountain Resort. Contact Linda at BIAC 303 562-0401 or Linda@BIAColorado.org.
Brain Injury Professional Networking (BIPN) Meetings

The Brain Injury Professional Networking (BIPN) groups seek to “improve the availability of services and supports for individuals with brain injury, promote the ongoing sustainability of community support systems, and share resources.” Each BIPN group is unique to its geographic region and strives to serve its community/region based upon identified needs.

Boulder-Longmont
Contact Tim Schaaf
Tim@BoulderShelter.org
303-468-4321

Denver
January 5, 2018
11:45 - 1:00 pm
Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado
1325 S Colorado Blvd, B-300
Denver, CO 80222
Contact Liz Gerdeman
Liz@BIAColorado.org
303-562-3298

Colorado Springs
January 16, 2018
February 20, 2018
11:30 am - 2:00 pm
Health South Rehab Hospital
325 Parkside Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80910
Contact Carol Cochran, CBIS at Carol@BIAColorado.org

Northern Colorado
Northern Colorado Rehab Hospital
4401 Union St.
Johnstown, CO 80534
Contact Sarah Beetch
Sarah.S.Beetch@ColoState.edu
970-491-3733

Western Slope
Contact Audrey McNeely at Audrey@BIAColorado.org

Statewide Pediatric BIPN
December 15, 2017
Contact Liz Gerdeman
Liz@BIAColorado.org
303-562-3298

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Brain Injury Hard to Serve Study

Background:
The Brain Injury Collaborative, Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado (BIAC), and MINDSOURCE – Brain Injury Network (formerly CO Brain Injury Program), began to identify what appeared to be a growing concern and need related to individuals with complex medical, and/or behavioral health needs experiencing significant challenges in accessing mental health (both long-term and acute) services. To better understand this need, MINDSOURCE funded a study conducted by Kone Consulting. The following key questions guided this study:

1. What is the current infrastructure in place to support individuals with brain injury?
2. Which Coloradans with brain injury are experiencing difficulties accessing the services they need?
3. Where are the current gaps in services and what contributes to these barriers?
4. What best/promising practices can inform recommendations?

Key Findings:
• There is no standardized screening and identification protocol to identify brain injury
• Brain injury is slow to capture public awareness
• Providers need better training on the symptoms of brain injury to avoid differential diagnosis for individuals
• Access to services is prevented by cost and health insurance
• Divided payer and services structure creates access barriers
• Complexity associated with treating brain injury and co-occurring conditions creates access limitations
• Disparate systems are hard for individuals and service providers to navigate
• Holistic care coordination generally does not exist for people with brain injury
• Affordable housing and appropriate residential facilities remain an unmet need
• Long term employment services are limited for people with brain injury

Key Recommendations:
• Develop, implement, evaluate, and disseminate a best practice protocol for screening, identification, and assessment of brain injury statewide
• Increase public education and awareness about brain injury
• Support providers and educators by increasing the availability of brain injury specialist to consult and train across systems
• Continue efforts toward integrated care to assure individuals with complex needs are getting services
• Remove remaining barriers to accessing behavioral health services
• Increase efforts to coordinate care over time and across continuum of needs
• Continue advancements toward person-centered, patient driven care
• Prioritize need for additional affordable housing and appropriate residential facilities
• Increase access to crisis stabilization services, specifically crisis stabilization units
• Integrate peer support into the brain injury and employment services
• Improve system coordination for children and youth with brain injury as they transition through school and into adult hood by building on the BrainSTEPS initiative
• Expand supported employment for people with brain injury

Next Steps:
MINDSOURCE will partner with BIAC to develop a strategic plan based on the findings and recommendations. Recommendations will be prioritized based upon high impact, high feasibility. This plan will be finalized with input from stakeholders such as the Collaborative. Opportunities have begun to emerge already such as:
• Expanding supported employment across waivers
• Increasing collaboration with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
• Expanding BrainSTEPS
• Implementing screening and identification protocols in high risk settings
• Training and education across behavioral health settings
Describe your role.
I am a case manager for the Southern Colorado area. I assist with resources and provide some hands-on supports. I co-facilitate the Pikes Peak Region Brain Injury Professionals Network meeting each month and facilitate a Brain Injury Support Group each month.

What has surprised you most about working with BIAC?
I am not surprised about anything about working with BIAC. BIAC has always been a supportive and reliable resource over the past years and it has been a pleasure being a part of such an incredible program. It truly is the “go to” program for anyone regarding brain injuries.

What would you tell someone that is thinking about donating to BIAC?
I would tell others about the many years BIAC has been helpful for so many survivors, caregivers, family members, and professionals in Colorado. The trainings, case management, activities, research, website, fundraisers, recreation activities, dedicated staff members, etc. all make BIAC such an incredible program.

What is your favorite thing to do outside of work?
I would love to travel again someday when life is less hectic, but for now, I crochet and watch movies or visit with friends and family.
What’s Inside?

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