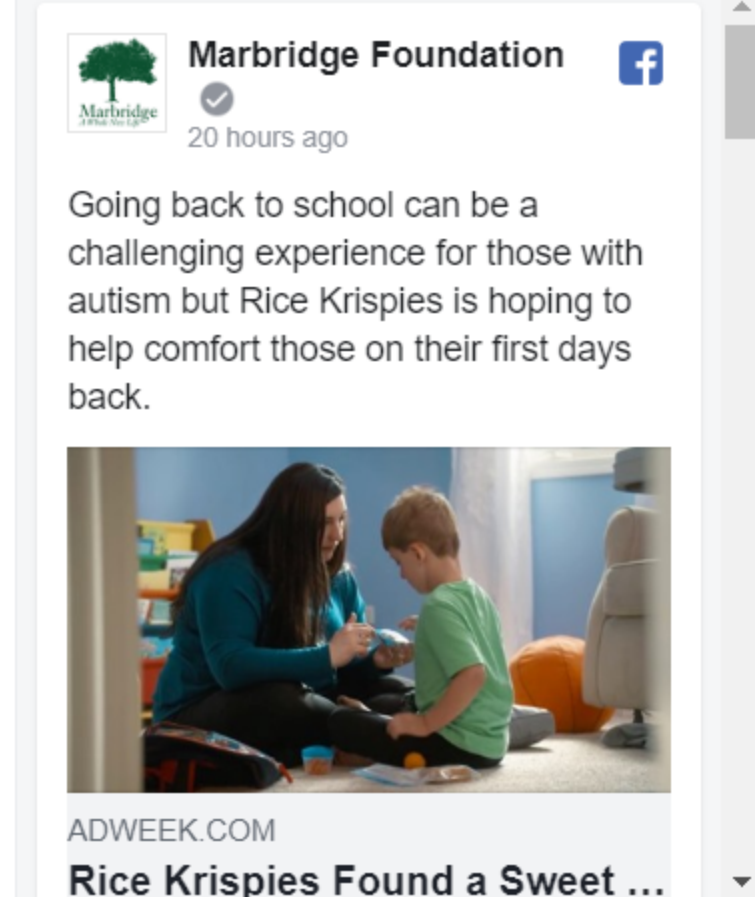
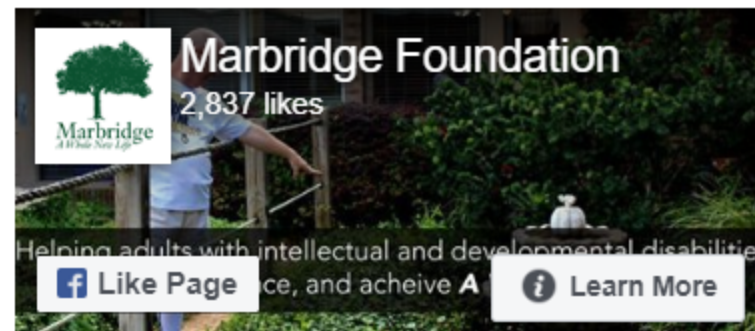




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Consider these things when choosing a home for a loved one with an intellectual disabilities



By Marbridge
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If your young-adult child or sibling has an intellectual disability, you know what goes into making sure they're well cared for, safe and in a nurturing, educational environment at home. Like all young adults, their needs change over the years, however. They seek and need more independence and social interaction or they might need extra medical help.

As your loved one with intellectual disability ages, they might need even more attention. If you're thinking about an assisted living home environment for your intellectually disabled loved one, there are important things to consider. Jenna Hudson, director of admissions at Marbridge, a nonprofit residential community in Travis County, Texas, has some advice. She's usually the first person at Marbridge the families and potential residents meet.



The start of a very important search

Most people look for a residential community by doing a web search first, Hudson said.

"You're getting so much information out there. When families meet with us at Marbridge, they do have some common concerns as well as specific questions and we are looking to see if their loved one would be a good fit here."

Part of determining that "fit" is making sure your loved one's disability or condition is one that the residential community is set up for. Not all communities are appropriate for all people, so it's important to start at that level first.

For instance, Marbridge requires potential residents to be at least 18 years of age, have a primary diagnosis of developmental delay or cognitive challenge, be able to follow a schedule of training and activity, and others.





Building independent living skills

Adults with cognitive disabilities still enjoy a healthy degree of independence and you'll want to make sure that your loved one is allowed as much freedom as possible, while still under a safe community umbrella.

At Marbridge there are three care communities that offer different levels of independence. When potential residents meet with Hudson, they are looking to see if one of the three Marbridge care communities would be a fit for their needs.

“At Marbridge, we talk to the family and the potential resident and do an assessment of their independence level as well as what they might need in terms of helping with life skills,” said Hudson. “If a person says to me, ‘I don’t really like to talk to anybody’ then we talk about life skills classes and reaching into their toolbox to pull out strategies for when they’re stressed or feel upset as well as relying on staff.”

The Village, the largest of the three care communities, offers independent and semi-independent living for up to 92 adults. Residents who live in The Village independent cottages enjoy a high degree of autonomy, yet still benefit from the highly supervised and safe environment of the Marbridge community.

The Ranch provides an assisted living setting for up to 88 residents. Residents are placed in either a shared room in a Dorm setting or a private bedroom in a Lodge setting based on where staff and loved ones believe would be a best fit. The Lodges offer a vibrant, lively atmosphere; each building is filled with natural and ambient light. The Dorm is a great fit for those with sensory stimulation issues who still need active stimulation but in a more calming environment. The whole Ranch community is equipped with 24-hour a day awake staff. A staff of resident trainers provides supervision and assistance with daily living as well as life-enriching activities.

Marbridge’s third facility is The Villa. The Villa provides a safe, loving environment for up to 82 people who cannot care for themselves. It is a licensed skilled nursing facility that provides individualized medical, rehabilitative, dietary, social, and spiritual services. Residents at The Villa represent a diversity of diagnoses. Many families choose The Villa for loved ones who may not have an intellectual disability, but more profound medical needs such as muscular dystrophy and cerebral palsy. Residents who live in The Villa enjoy a full life with a schedule full of games, activities, and opportunities offered on campus as well as some community outings while under 24-hour licensed medical supervision.

Another aspect of building independent living skills are outside excursion. Members of all three of Marbridge communities have the opportunity to go into the community and neighboring towns for classes, jobs, and cultural events. Marbridge personalizes outings to meet the residents’ skills and at least one staff member is always present for activities on or off campus.



Safety is a number one concern

“Generally, the first question is about safety, and it’s an important one,” said Hudson. “When a family comes in they’re looking for a safe place.”

Hudson explains that families should explore the layout and size of a community and consider their loved one’s level of orientation and ambulation abilities in determining whether or not they would be a good fit.

“Marbridge is set up like a college campus and in order for someone to be appropriate, they need to be able to independently ambulate and have good orientation to the grounds.”

It’s important to know your loved one’s abilities and limitations and ask the admissions staff how their safety systems can fit their needs including as it relates to the staff. Marbridge is comprised of three interconnected communities, each with a different level of care.

Families choose Marbridge because of their high safety standards and attention to detail of each resident’s schedules, both on and off campus.

“Each of our communities has different safety protocols. The Village and The Ranch communities of Marbridge fall under assisted living licenses and The Villa runs under a Skilled Nursing License. We have state mandated requirements that we generally exceed, and are accountable to Life Safety criteria, health department requirements, fire marshal criteria, and mandatory annual training requirements. We’re surveyed by the state annually in order to keep our license current,” says Hudson.

“Marbridge itself, has protocol for attendance checks, sign in/out logs, 24-hour awake staff, monthly staff trainings specific to our residents’ needs, camera monitoring at entrances and in common areas on the grounds, and any

resident-specific accommodations necessary for safety.”



Keeping your loved one engaged and active

Be sure to research and discuss the social and educational opportunities available in the community as well as physical fitness programs.

“After safety, usually the second question we talk about is how we keep residents engaged. In addition to evening and weekend enrichment activities provided by the assisted living communities, Marbridge also has a Training & Education Program that provides residents training and enrichment during the daytime hours specific to their personal abilities, interests, and goals,” says Hudson. “When families are first touring Marbridge, I provide them with an overview of some of the classes we offer. While the families are really interested, it’s important to look at it with a prospective resident too. They’ll say, ‘I like music’, or ‘I like gardening’, or ‘I would like to improve in this area’ and we talk about how our schedules are individualized to help them meet their goals.”

At Marbridge, goals are examined annually, utilizing input from the resident and their loved ones at their annual Individual Program Plan (IPP) meeting.



Maintaining family involvement

Another important consideration is how a family stays involved after their loved one has moved into their new residential community. You’ll want to ask about any volunteer opportunities, how often you can take your loved one off campus, and what the ongoing interaction might look like.

“We want residents to adjust to living at Marbridge when they first move to campus, so during the first six weeks, families are encouraged to limit their interaction with residents to calls, FaceTime, and emails. After that, families can come visit their loved ones on campus or take them for outings,” says Hudson. “On weekends, we stay pretty engaged on campus and there are always options for residents to find something they’ll enjoy.”

Most residential communities will have a family association, like a PTA, as well. Since Marbridge is only one of three facilities of its kind in the nation, residents come from all over the U.S., so it’s incredibly important for families to stay informed.

“We have a Marbridge Parent & Family Association where families are involved and organize events,” says Hudson. “They sponsor events for residents and help out behind the scenes when they can. There are a lot of opportunities for families to stay connected.”

More of the opportunities for families to stay connected to their loved ones include extended breaks in between learning opportunities. The breaks typically last about three weeks before our training and education classes start a new semester. Those happen in the spring, summer, and at the end of the year. Families also enjoy the annual Christmas Program consisting of a play, choir, and band performance from more than 50 residents.

Marbridge hosts multiple family dinners across the country so families who live out of state or can’t visit as often as they would like are able to stay connected and visit with each other and the Marbridge leadership team.

Be sure to consider all these factors when thinking about a residential community for your loved one. Find out if Marbridge is the right fit for your loved one by completing an online application or scheduling a visit by calling 512.735.2704.

Nestled near the intersection of Bliss Spillar Road and FM1626, Marbridge is a hidden gem that’s polished brightly by the dedicated staff who work to create a loving and educational experience for its residents. Learn more by visiting www.marbridge.org, or schedule a visit by calling 512-282-1144.



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with an intellectual disability.**



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