

Financial Planning Tips



Limited resources doesn't limit you

Following a brain tumor diagnosis, life is vastly different and often demands you to be an expert on many issues in order to survive it all. There are many programs that become available to you following a diagnosis particularly if you have been determined disabled. During treatment, it is important that you and your Caregiver focus on your health. To manage the “background noise” of bills and household management issues, we provide some tools and resources to get you started. It is important to be able to focus on the things that you can change and set aside those that may need further focus.

Life is an album-this is just a snapshot

It is difficult to remember that life is made up of phases. Today's reality may feel like your future is pre-determined but just a reminder, this is just a snapshot in your life's album. While this period may be financially challenging, it may stabilize with the proper planning and supportive resources. Developing a plan of action to cope and feeling in control of your life's affairs is essential to your overall sense of well-being. The BTAO strives to empower survivors in self-advocacy skills using simple organization methods.

It's in the mail

Opening the mail takes on a different meaning and becomes very overwhelming when you are undergoing treatment. One Caregiver found a way to sort and organize the mail so as to not get “caught up” in each and every correspondence on a daily basis. As the mail was brought in, she sorted the mail into simple categories and within a spiral bound pocket binder. Her recommended [pocket binder](#) was one that had clear pockets inside and could be written on by a [china marker](#). This way, labels wouldn't come off and you could wipe off the writing with a cloth.

Suggested labeling:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1) Enter into Computer | <i>Items such as business cards, resource information, etc.</i> |
| 2) Mark on Calendar | <i>Events fliers, social gatherings, appointments, etc.</i> |
| 3) Pay ASAP (as soon as possible) | <i>Place monthly budget sheet and bills due by certain date here.</i> |
| 4) Make Payments | <i>Payment arrangements made noted and placed here along with invoices</i> |
| 5) Review | <i>Mail offers such as insurance, credit, re-finance, etc. to be reviewed</i> |
| 6) Dispute | <i>Bill disputes, insurance denials, credit disputes, etc. to be managed here</i> |
| 7) Scan into Computer | <i>Keep an electronic copy of correspondences for easy reference</i> |
| 8) File (or other) | <i>Completed items to be filed placed here</i> |

One day each week, she would review the bills that needed to be paid, issues that needed to be addressed and review other items as necessary. This helped to reduce the stress one experiences when being flooded with written correspondences and allowed the individual to focus on the issues at a time of their choosing.

A Personal Assistant

You may not realize it but your computer can serve as your personal assistant in many ways. The computer operating system provides tutorials within your **Start** menu often under **Help and Support**. Office programs also provide tutorials, help and support within their programs. Look under the **Help** link in the program's menu and it will provide you diagnostic tools, online support articles, a way to contact the program's developer and a link to the **Help menu (F1)**. Fax services are an option within Windows but require the use of a landline phone line to be connected to your computer to allow transmissions and a scanner to be able to scan in documents that need to be transmitted.

Set up an electronic filing system within **My Documents** on your computer and begin saving your documents, bills, online payment receipts and correspondences specific to each creditor or vendor. Electronic copies allow you to track correspondences and actions regarding specific issues. A summary of actions can be easily documented within your correspondences so that if follow up is necessary, you can update the record as you go and provide it to the recipient.

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Homestead Exemption

You may qualify if you are...

- age 65 on or before December 31, preceding the tax year in which you wish to claim the exemption
- totally and permanently disabled
- legally blind;
- the surviving spouse of a qualifying applicant

For information specific to your area, contact your city, county or state property tax office and verify the criteria to have your personal property taxes reduced due to a Homestead Exemption.

Filing Your Taxes

The United Way of Greenville is offering the **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)**, an IRS-certified program which provides free income tax preparation assistance to individuals and families with a low-to-moderate income (defined as having a household income of less than \$49,000). Contact your local United Way Agency, visit www.211.org or Call 2-1-1

Individuals can file their income taxes for free at The Internal Revenue Service website. The Free File program provides free federal income tax preparation and electronic filing for eligible taxpayers through a partnership between the Internal Revenue Service and the Free File Alliance LLC, a group of private sector tax software companies. Many companies offer free or paid state tax preparation and e-filing services. Some companies may not offer state tax preparation and e-file services for all states.

www.irs.gov

With all Free File options you can:

File your taxes any hour of the day or night.

Know that your return is safe and secure.

Get your refund in a few as 10 days with Direct Deposit.

File a free federal [extension](#).

Receive a quick IRS confirmation, within 48 hours, that your return was received.

The IRS Alternative Media Center is working to make IRS tax forms and publications fully accessible and Section 508 compliant. These "talking tax forms" work with MSAA compliant screen readers as well as Dragon Naturally Speaking Voice Recognition Software. We are using the Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (PDF) as a means of distributing government forms as well as other documents. The IRS has made over 650 tax forms available in accessible PDF format.

Open Enrollment for Medicare Advantage Plans

(Check with your insurance provider)

There is an Open Enrollment Period (OEP) from January 1 - March 31 for Medicare Advantage plans. A person must have a Prescription Drug Plan (PDP), even with their medigap to enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan because the PDP enrollment ended December 31st. They would have to enroll in the same level of Rx coverage - ex: if they have plus PDP, then they would have to enroll in a plus MedAdv. plan. The main thing is that a person would HAVE to have Rx coverage to participate in the OEP.

Get Support from our website:

<http://braintumorawareness.org/support.html>

Download our [resource booklet](#) for other resources.

Download a financial [budget template](#) (Excel) or [sheet](#) (PDF) to manage, forecast and plan your finances.

Download a [Concerns Worksheet](#) to assess your concerns, prioritize them and develop an action plan.

987 Dacusville Road
Marietta, SC 29661
864-836-4609

www.braintumorawareness.org

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