

# Easing Transitions in Long-Term Care

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## Principles for Easing the Transition for Families and New Residents

### *Principle One: The fewer moves, the better*

- Relocation is extremely difficult and each move has a greater chance of threatening the self-concept and well-being of the older adult and the health and well-being of the family
- Only relocate an older adult if absolutely necessary

### *Principle Two: Prepare families and residents for the move*

- Provide adequate, truthful information to families throughout process
  - Waiting for move – information sessions about the moving process
  - Once placement decision is made – information on types of items they could/should bring to the facility/new unit, names and contact information for key people at the facility/new unit, days the doctor is available, information about the facility/units services/activities including information about the new settings' policies/regulations
  - After placement – discussion of family member roles in the facility, information sessions on practical strategies for responding to resident behaviours and to enhance the quality of visits
- Provide a clear sense of time lines for families
- Provide more time to make the decision, arrange for the move, and prepare the new setting for the resident – the more familiar the new room the easier the transition for the resident
- Provide an honest discussion on the pros and cons of relocation and what families should expect during the transition process
- Introduce family and the new resident to the new environment and staff in that new setting *before* the move
- Support families in telling the relative about the move

### *Principle Three: Be aware of the experience for family members and new residents*

- Be aware that every transition is stressful and that families and residents experience a range of emotions during transitions (e.g., ambiguity, ambivalence, guilt, anxiety, grief, loss, sadness, powerlessness, sense of isolation/feeling alone, sense of relief, peace of mind, comfort).
- Different families will experience the transition and adjust to the move in different ways (some will have a very positive experience and others will not).
- Accept that these anxieties are “normal” and are not necessarily a reflection of the care provided by staff but likely reflect circumstances you are not fully aware of
- Provide support for families and new residents before, during, and after the transition process (e.g., support group, mentors, social workers, etc.)
- Families seek out information that will validate their choices – be prepared to help in that process

### ***Principle Four: Help families feel more in control of the process***

- Acknowledge and respect the knowledge-bases and expertise of family members and residents
- Determine how much involvement family members/residents want in decision-making and in what areas they wish to be involved
- Include family members and the new resident in decision-making throughout the process (e.g., placement procedures, overall plan for care, etc.) – really listen to their concerns and wishes, respect and support their choices and work together to find the best solution
- Be as flexible as possible throughout the process

### ***Principle Five: Ensure the actual move is as easy and welcoming as possible for family members and the resident***

- Ensure appropriate placement decisions are made
- Provide a fluid process between the former setting and the new setting – this requires strong partnerships and collaborations
- Provide flexibility in the admission process
- Involve the new resident in a facility/unit activity so that the family can prepare room
- Provide a welcoming environment
  - greet and welcome family members and their relatives when they arrive at the facility/unit
  - check in regularly with family during the move
  - assist with the move when at all possible
  - have a staff member assigned to the family to assist with the actual move

### ***Principle Six: Get to know the new resident and family***

- Show the family and resident that you value person-centered and/or family models of care by gaining knowledge of the new resident and her/his family
- Find out about the resident's background, interests, preferences, routines, ADL limitations, sleep patterns, etc.
- Interview families to explore family roles and responsibilities, expectations, other issues/concerns

### ***Principle Seven: Enhance communication between families and staff***

- Develop open, honest communication lines between staff, residents, and family members
- If possible, ensure a dialogue takes place between staff in the former setting and staff in new setting about the care needs and preferences of the new resident
- Have a specific plan or procedures in place to ensure that all information about the new resident and family member gets to *all* staff members on *all* shifts in the new setting
- Introduce family members and the new resident to staff members who will be caring for the relative
- Ensure that family members know who they can contact should they need to inquire about their relative (e.g., family advocate)

### ***Principle Eight: Help family members and residents build their resource base***

- Help families work as a unit in the decision-making process throughout the actual move
- Make families aware of supports and services available to them in the community and in the long-term care setting (e.g., Alzheimer Society Chapters, support groups, councillors, educational programs, reading materials, transportation services, moving companies)
- Foster strong, respectful resident-staff and family-staff relationships
- Help in the development of new friendships for the resident in the new environment
- Link family members up with others who have been through the process/family member mentors

### ***Principle Nine: Strive for the highest quality of care***

- Families will hear about facilities that have a reputation of providing good care and will feel more comfortable moving a loved one to that site
- Research is consistent – if families feel that good quality of care is being provided by caring staff they adjust more quickly and positively to the move and are able to focus on being just family rather than compensating for poor or inadequate care
- Homey environments that provide quality care by caring staff will help breakdown the stigma attached to long-term care settings

### ***Principle Ten: Maintain continuity in the resident's life***

- Relocation can threaten the self-concept of the older adult resident, particularly when valued roles, relationships and activities are lost because of the move
- Maintain continuity in the resident's life as much as possible
  - allow the family to set up the room prior to the move and in a similar way to the former setting
  - facilitate participation in valued activities and friendships in previous setting
  - have a staff from former setting participate in the process

For more information about this project or other MAREP projects contact:

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