

The Move and the First Months

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From
The Sitting Room Series

**BOOK 12 · GETTING MORE
HELP**

The Move and the First Months

For Families and the Person Moving

Stephen Deason



Alder
Creek
EDITIONS

The Move and the First Months

For Families and the Person Moving

Book 12 of The Sitting Room Series

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Contents

Preface.....	8
1. Who This Is For and How to Use It.....	13
2. When She Says No.....	20
3. The Weeks Before.....	27
4. What to Keep.....	36
5. The House.....	42
6. Moving Day.....	47
7. The First Weeks.....	53
8. Moving Into Memory Care.....	60
9. The First 90 Days.....	65
10. Trips to the Hospital.....	79
11. Working With the Staff.....	86
12. When Something Is Wrong.....	92
13. If the Move Is Not Working.....	98
Part Two: For You, the Person Moving....	103
14. Your New Home.....	104
Sources.....	114

Where to Get Help.....	139
Index.....	144
The Sitting Room Series.....	148
Also by Stephen Deason.....	151
About the Author.....	157

Preface

This book is personal for multiple reasons. I have spent about forty years working inside health care. I began volunteering in a hospital at fifteen and was working as an orderly by sixteen, helping care for patients in hospitals and nursing homes while I worked my way through college. Later, I spent more than twenty years building and running systems for hospitals, insurers, Medicaid programs, and other health care organizations before returning to direct care through healthcare staffing, home care, and skilled nursing. Today I am an Administrator of a licensed health care facility that delivers care in patients' homes.

That facility is OPA Home Care, which I founded and run. In Georgia it is a licensed Private Home Care Provider, or PHCP. My healthcare staffing company employed

nurses and aides across hundreds of health care facilities around the country, including through the COVID years, and our home care operations have recruited, hired, and managed caregiving staff for hundreds of families. I have watched older adults and their families face what this series covers, often in a hurry and usually at a difficult time.

What I kept seeing was this. Families meet the information in pieces, after they already need it, from people who each answer a different piece. The hospital owns the discharge. The insurer owns the benefit. The home care provider owns its services. Each of them may do that job well. The family still has to put the puzzle pieces together.

It happened to my own family. My mother was found wandering the parking lot of a hospital, looking for her car. She had a

urinary tract infection that urgent care and the hospital both missed, and she was sent home with severe delirium and a new diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment. It took two weeks, and a nurse practitioner and a doctor we knew who were willing to look again, before anyone found the cause. She stayed with us for two months and then moved into independent living. She has kept improving, and she is driving again. The infection was ordinary. The months that followed were the cost of catching it late.

Much of the information in this series is already available somewhere. Medicare publishes Medicare's rules. The VA explains VA benefits, and each state explains its own programs. Having information spread across so many places is part of the problem. Families do not meet these questions one provider or agency at a time. The questions arrive together. I wrote this

series to put many needed pieces in one place, in the order people tend to need them, with a way to record or otherwise act on each answer.

The facts and program rules in this book come from the sources listed at the back, each with the chapters that use it. The judgment about which facts matter, how they fit together, what families often discover too late, and what questions to ask comes from years of doing this work. Chapter 11, on working with the staff, draws on that work most. My staffing company filled open shifts in hundreds of facilities. I know how a building runs on a Tuesday morning, and how it runs at two in the morning on a Sunday, and the two are not the same building.

This book is written to you, the family member making the move happen. Part Two, at the end, is written to the person

who is moving, and she is welcome to read every page.

This book will help you plan the weeks before the move, decide what goes and what stays, get through moving day, and know what to watch for, who to talk to, and who to call in the first months. Start with Chapter 1, or with whatever brought you here.

1. Who This Book Is For and How to Use It

This book is for you if someone you love is moving into a place where they will get care: an assisted living community, a personal care home, memory care, or a nursing home. You may be a son or daughter, a husband or wife, a niece, or a friend who has ended up in charge. The place may already be chosen, or you may be close to choosing.

Some moves are planned for months. Most of the moves I have watched start in a hospital. A fall or an infection puts the person in the hospital, rehab follows, and partway through the rehab stay the family learns she cannot safely go home. The decision then gets made in a few days, often in a hallway, with a discharge planner waiting. The families who had looked at

places before the crisis had a choice. The others took whatever bed was open.

This book is for both kinds of move.

The kinds of places

The names differ from state to state. In Georgia, the main kinds are these:

- A personal care home gives a place to live, meals, and help with daily care. Georgia licenses personal care homes.
- An assisted living community is a larger home with its own Georgia license.

When a resident cannot take her own medicines, the community must give them to her, and the staff who do it must be at least certified medication aides. A personal care home helps residents take their own medicines, and only some personal care homes may have trained staff give them.

- Memory care is a unit or a whole community set up for people with dementia. In Georgia, an assisted living community or personal care home that runs a memory care unit must hold a memory care certificate from the state.
- A nursing home gives nursing care around the clock. Nursing homes follow federal rules as well as state rules, and many of the rights in this book come from those federal rules.

Some homes that take in older adults for pay have no license at all. If a place cannot show you its license, do not move anyone into it.

If the move is to independent living, Chapters 2 through 6 still apply. The chapters on care plans, complaints, and the ombudsman mostly do not, because independent living usually provides no care.

Moving in with family

Some families move a parent into a grown child's home instead. The planning in Chapters 2 through 6 applies to that move too. Help in the home, and paying for it, are covered in Book 7, Arranging Care at Home, which is free at aldercreekeditions.com. Chapter 13 has a section on when that arrangement stops working.

What this book does

It walks through the move in the order the work comes: the decision, the weeks before, what to keep, the house, moving day, the first weeks, and the first three months. It tells you how a care place actually runs, which staff member can fix which problem, and how to raise a problem so it gets fixed. It tells you who to call when something is wrong. Part Two is written to the person who is moving.

It does not choose a place for you. Book 11, Choosing a Place to Live, covers the kinds of places, inspection records, tours, the admission agreement, and costs. Book 11 is free at aldercreekeditions.com.

Read it in pieces

You do not have to read this book in order. Each chapter stands on its own. Start with the one that answers the question in front of you.

Where to start

- If your parent does not want to move, start with Chapter 2.
- If the move is in the next few weeks, start with Chapter 3.
- If the move is to memory care, read Chapter 8 before moving day.
- If the move has happened and something seems wrong, start with

Chapter 7. If someone has been hurt, start with Chapter 12.

- If she will need Medicaid or VA benefits to pay for her care, read Chapter 9.
- If your parent has gone to the hospital from the new place, start with Chapter 10.
- If you are the person moving, Part Two, Chapter 14, is written to you.

A word about the people in this book

The families described in this book come from my own work, without names or identifying details. The accounts of my own family are mine.

NOTES

1. Who This Book Is For *and* How to Use It

*“Through wisdom is an house builded; and
by understanding it is established.”*

Proverbs 24:3, King James Version

2. When She Says No

Many people do not want to move, and some say so for a long time. While she can make her own decisions, where she lives is her decision. A family's worry, however well founded, does not change that.

Talking it through

Start with what she is afraid of losing. For many people it is the house, but often it is something smaller and more specific: the garden, the neighbor across the street, the church, the dog, the right to come and go. Ask what would have to be true for a move to be bearable. Write down the answers. Some of them can come with her.

I have watched parents say no for a year or more. What usually changed a parent's mind was a doctor saying it plainly, a friend who had moved and liked it, or a scare the parent could not explain away. Ask her

doctor to have that conversation at the next visit, and ask to be in the room if she agrees.

Some places offer a short stay, often called respite, before a full move. A week or two lets her see the room, the meals, and the people before deciding. Ask the place what a short stay costs and whether it counts toward admission.

What you can sign, and what you cannot

A power of attorney for money and a health care agent named in an advance directive each give someone authority to act for her. What that authority covers depends on the document and on your state's law. In Georgia, the state's advance directive form gives a health care agent authority to admit a person to a health care facility, unless the form itself limits it. Whether that covers the kind of place she

is moving to, and whether either document lets you sign the admission agreement, are questions for an elder law attorney or legal aid before you sign. Book 4, *Before It's Urgent*, free at aldercreekeditions.com, explains the documents.

Read the signature line before you sign anything. A nursing home may not require someone else to guarantee payment as a condition of admission. If you sign as her representative, you are signing for her. Do not sign as a “responsible party” who promises to pay from your own money unless an attorney has told you what that means. A nursing home that takes Medicare or Medicaid also may not require her to agree to arbitration, which sends disputes to a private arbitrator instead of a court, as a condition of admission or of staying. Book 11 covers the rest of the agreement.

Federal privacy law allows her doctors to talk with family members who are involved in her care, unless she objects. Some offices and places still ask for a signed authorization before they will talk with you. Ask her to sign one for each doctor and for the new place, so nobody has to decide on the phone whether you count.

When she cannot decide

If her memory or judgment has gone so far that she cannot make the decision, a health care agent she named may be able to act, depending on the document. If she named no one, the family may need to ask the probate court to appoint a guardian.

Guardianship takes away a person's right to decide for herself, so courts treat it as a last step. It costs money and takes time. Talk with an elder law attorney first, and ask about every other choice before filing.

Who to ask about authority to sign

Who to call or ask: An elder law attorney or legal aid, before you sign for someone else or ask a court for guardianship. The probate court clerk in her county, about how guardianship works there.

How to reach them: Find an elder law attorney at naela.org. In Georgia, people 60 and older can call Georgia Senior Legal Aid at 404-389-9992 from anywhere in the state, or the Elderly Legal Assistance Program office for their county, listed at aging.georgia.gov.

What you can say: My mother needs more care than she can get at home, and she does not want to move. I want to know what I can and cannot do, and what her papers let me sign.

Brothers and sisters

Families tell me that the decision is often made by the one child who lives closest, and second-guessed by the ones who live farther away. Before moving day, tell every brother and sister what the doctor said, what the place costs, and why this place was chosen. Put it in writing. A sibling who learns the details after the move is more likely to fight it.

Many people describe guilt about the move, even when they know it is right. Some feel it for months. Some also feel relief, and then guilt about the relief. Families describe all of these, and none of them shows whether the decision was right.

NOTES

2. When She Says No

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

Proverbs 17:17, King James Version

End of the preview

You have read the first two chapters of The Move and the First Months: For Families and the Person Moving, Book 12 of The Sitting Room Series. The full book has 14 chapters, in large print.

The book's page at aldercreekeditions.com has the buy links for the paperback and Kindle editions once they are on sale. The ISBN below is the paperback's.

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The worksheets from this book are free to print at aldercreekeditions.com, where the other books in the series are listed too.

You are welcome to share this preview with anyone it might help.

