



What to Expect When Moving Into Long Term Care

Long Term Care: “Dealing with the natural anxiety and guilt”

When Bev helped her father John move into a long-term care home in a small town east of Toronto, she says her initial reaction was one of guilt and anxiety about the separation.

“We had talked about it but I was aware that with this move to long-term care, his whole life would change. There was a loss for him and, of course, I felt guilty. I worried about what I would be doing for him now.”

~ Bev....

As for her father...

“I felt somewhat overwhelmed at first by the experience.”

~ John, 85...

The decision to place someone you love in a long term care home is one of the most difficult you will ever have to make. Your fears and concerns are perfectly normal.

Long term care homes understand the decision and the transition are difficult for both the family and the resident. Much of what they do immediately before and after admission responds to this understanding.

A review of recent studies on relocation stress in long term care, compiled by the Ontario Long Term Care Association, indicates that caregivers often demonstrate mixed feelings about placing a loved one in long term care. They feel guilt that they could not continue to provide care for a loved one along with feelings of relief that the burden of care had been lifted.

Guilt is definitely the number one initial emotion faced by family members when an elderly person moves into a home, says Donna, who has worked in a long term care home in Eastern Ontario for more than 15 years and meets with new arrivals and their families. “Family members are wondering whether they have done the right thing and sometimes they are also dealing with a family member who opposes the move.”

Family members need to be aware that whatever family dynamics existed prior to admission very often continue after admission. The need to manage these dynamics does not disappear.

“If you go through the hard work of checking out homes, with family members sitting down to discuss the move, the transformation goes easier,” she says. “For both caregivers and homes, the key is to keep the resident at the centre of the process. Give them choices as to where they want to live.”

“I’d advise families to do some homework ahead of time. It makes for an easier move.”

“Homes try to alleviate the initial stress and smooth out any problem areas through early conferences with the resident and family and regular contact with caregivers,” Donna says.

She has found that depression is not a major factor among residents coming into the home. “When they come in, the decision has been made,” she says. “I’m finding, that unless it is a crisis admission, more and more, people are prepared for the move to long term care. We encourage people to come in to see us and talk about long term care,” she says. “We also suggest they talk to their

Preparing to Move Into Long Term Care

- Make a list of your top priorities in care needs and comfort preferences.
- Consider the location of the home and how it can be accessed by relatives and friends.
- Contact homes in the preferred area and arrange for a tour.
- Ask questions. Use the OLTCA Checklist for assessing long term care homes, available at www.oltca.com

doctor, their clergy, about the move.”

One of the biggest adjustment for a new resident is that “loss of personal space,” she says. “That’s why we encourage residents to bring important personal items to their new home.”

The Residents’ Council keeps an eye out for new arrivals and assists in the adjustment

Some of the Things That Will Happen

- Contracts and other paperwork to process
- Meetings with the Administrator and Director of Care
- Unpacking and setting up the room
- Introductions to other members of the management team
- Meetings with the dietary manager to identify food preferences
- Being assigned a dining table
- Meeting other residents
- Reviewing safety, security and comfort features

to a home, Donna says. The Residents’ Council meetings are places where residents can meet new people and make new friends. The Residents’ Council is also a body where residents can bring their concerns, ideas and suggestions which will be taken to the home’s management.

The home’s management is available to provide information and education to both the Residents’ Council and Family Council.

Once they have moved into the home, the emphasis for staff is on welcoming new residents into their new home, Donna says. “Staff often provide a little extra encouragement to socialize and take part in programs,” she says.

“In many cases, within a short time, the resident and family can see a transformation in their loved one,” she says. “Their health is improving, they are eating better and starting to socialize.”

A long term care home is not a “drop-off place,” she says. “We sit down with the family and encourage them to visit and to participate in health-care decisions. The resident and the family are involved in resident care conferences and conferences with the doctors, physiotherapists and other staff.”

Family members can also get involved as volunteers and are encouraged to participate on Family Councils. Both the Residents’ Council and the Family Council deal with concerns raised by families and residents, she points out. A home must respond to any concerns raised.

In one study on coping with the long term care placement process it was found that adjustment to a new long term care placement occurred in three phases: feeling overwhelmed, adjustment and initial acceptance. It was also found that these stages were negotiated more quickly by residents and family members for which long term care admission had been planned.

This suggests that early discussion of

The Three Phases of Moving In

1. Feeling overwhelmed
2. Adjustment
3. Initial acceptance

long term care placement is instrumental in helping seniors adjust to a new living environment.

Bev says participation by her and her father in a family conference when her father moved in along with opportunities to participate in careplanning, regular updates from staff and regular visits alleviated many of her concerns and those of her father.

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“I quickly felt very comfortable in my new home. I am living again with my wife, the church is close by and I can also walk to the store,” says John.

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All applications for long-term care must be made through a Community Care Access Centre (CCAC). To find your CCAC go to: www.ccac-ont.ca

For other information on long term care in Ontario visit: www.health.gov.on.ca
www.oltca.com

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