Tips for Making a Positive Transition to Long-Term Care

There are several things you can do to ease the transition to a long-term care community for your loved one and help to create a home-like environment for them. These include:

• **Do your research and ask about state licensure survey results** – Caregivers need to have a high degree of comfort in their selection. The quality of long-term care providers can vary greatly. Is the community deficiency-free? If they had deficiencies on their latest state survey, what were they? Is the community close enough to your home and/or work to allow for visitation at a level that is best for your family? Does the community meet the specific medical, social, therapeutic and emotional needs of your loved one?

• **Discuss it with your loved one** – Do not let your loved one think that you are making the decision for them. The first conversation should be a discussion, not an intervention. Stress their need for round-the-clock care to remain safe and well. Prepare for the fact that the process may take time.

• **Empathize with their emotions** – Be sensitive to their emotional attachment to their home and their memories there. Let them know that you understand that it is a difficult time. Be patient and understanding. Offer reassurance of your ongoing commitment and plans for regular visitation.

• **Prepare their room ahead of time** – Plan to have their new room set up before your loved one moves in. Put in familiar items, but nothing of significant value that could be misplaced or damaged. Creating a familiar, home-like environment for your loved one is extremely important in helping them to make a successful transition.

• **Be with them for the move** – Accompany your loved for the actual move, and reinforce that they will be okay and that you are there to help. You may want to stay for the day and have dinner with them in the community. When it is time to leave, explain that you have to leave for a while, but will return as soon as you can. Assure your loved one that they will be fine.

• **Have a “home-warming party”** – Take the opportunity to celebrate. Bring cherished items or new items to decorate with as well as their favorite treats or dessert. Invite their friends for the occasion as well.

• **Provide input to the staff** – Discuss your loved one with the staff, including their personality traits, likes and dislikes, personal interests and history. Employees need time to learn about your loved one’s medical condition, temperament, behavior patterns and preferences.

• **Ask for some special attention** – Introduce your loved one to the employee who will be available during the first shift that they are there alone. Ask the staff to communicate that your loved one is new to the community and needs some special consideration, kindness and reassurance.
• **Eat together** – Dining together a couple of times a week can be a great way to keep in touch and maintain that family bond. In addition, residents may socialize more when there is someone new to introduce.

• **Stay connected and be their advocate** – Check in regularly for visits. You can also use that time to monitor the care of your loved one on a regular basis and to be their advocate with the staff and administration.

• **Take care of yourself, too!** – This can be a very challenging, emotional time for you as well. Use your network of family and friends for emotional comfort. You can also seek support from others who have been through this situation. The long-term care community may host a support group on-site, or you can look for a support group in your area.

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