



Moves for Seniors

*The Nationwide Leader in Senior Moving Services*



# Relocation Stress Syndrome

*Reduce the risk for your loved ones  
and senior community residents*

# Overview

What is Relocation Stress Syndrome? .....	1
Signs and Symptoms .....	2
Combatting Relocation Stress Syndrome .....	3
Stress Minimization.....	4
About Moves for Seniors.....	5
References .....	6

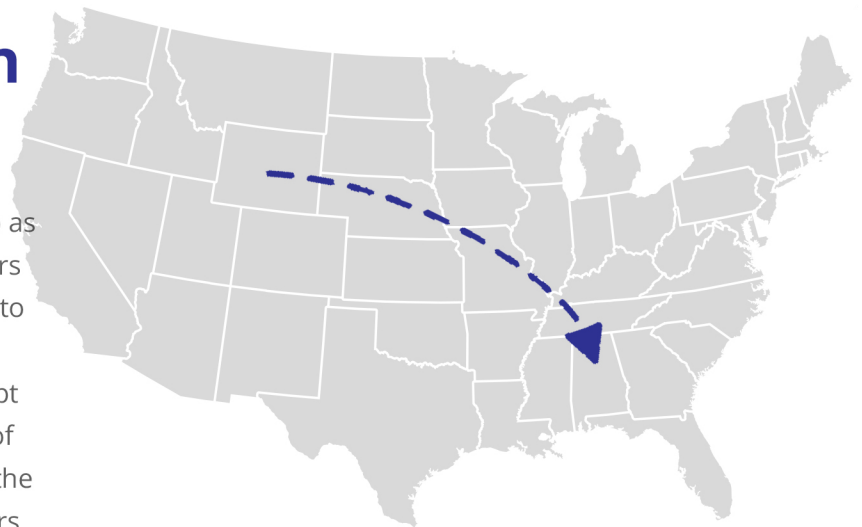
*“when the adjustment period doesn’t end or continues to worsen, Relocation Stress Syndrome may possibly be the problem.”*

-Jackson, K

## What is Relocation Stress Syndrome?

Relocation Stress Syndrome (also referred to as Transfer Trauma) is a formal diagnosis seniors may face when relocating from one location to another. Defined as “the combination of medical and psychological reactions to abrupt physical transfer that may increase the risk of grave illness or death “ (Manion and Rantz), the syndrome is seen mostly frequently in seniors relocating to environments with different levels of care. Whether downsizing, moving in with a child, or being placed in an assisted-living community, a new transition takes time to adjust. But when the adjustment period doesn’t end or continues to worsen, Relocation Stress Syndrome may possibly be the problem (Jackson, K).

Oftentimes, seniors find themselves faced with the prospect of moving rather suddenly. A quick trip to the hospital can turn into an extended rehab stay which can turn into a necessary relocation to a senior living community. This sudden change would be difficult for anyone, and proves especially stressful for older adults.



## The risk of Relocation Stress Syndrome increases if there is:

1. Little or no time to prepare for a move.
2. A lack of predictability about the new environment.
3. Little or no time between notification of move and the move itself. (Avadian, B)

Seniors with any type of cognitive impairment, mild confusion, and dementia are at a higher risk for Relocation Stress Syndrome but “any time there’s a move, there’s a potential for transfer trauma (Mintz, T).

*“The greatest incidences of Relocation Stress Syndrome occur just before the move and during a three-month period following relocation.”*

## Signs and Symptoms

How can you know if your loved one or community resident is suffering from Relocation Stress Syndrome? The only true way is to get an official diagnosis from a medical professional. However, make sure to be on the lookout for the following symptoms:

- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Helplessness
- Loneliness
- Withdrawal
- Ongoing Worry
- Pessimism (Jackson, K)

The greatest incidences of Relocation Stress Syndrome occur just before the move and during a three-month period following relocation. Medical professionals will evaluate at-risk seniors for the following signs:

- Changes in eating habits
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Demonstration of dependency
- Changes in cognition
- Insecurity or lack of trust
- Decline in self-care
- Changes in familial relationships

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**Avadian, B**

Every senior is different, but on average it takes an individual a minimum of 30 days to adjust to a new home. While less likely, seniors may be at risk for Relocation Stress Syndrome after 3 months so it is important for caregivers to stay alert and have a plan (Avadian, B).



## Combatting Relocation Stress Syndrome

The best way to combat Relocation Stress Syndrome is by allowing seniors enough time to come to terms with a relocation. If possible, work hand in hand with the aging family member well in advance of the move so they can be involved in planning and decision making. Feeling like they are in control of the relocation process will help them with the adjustment.

However, due to circumstances beyond their control, seniors may be faced with moving without much time to prepare. If this is the case, make sure to help the senior follow the stages below and minimize stress in any way you can.

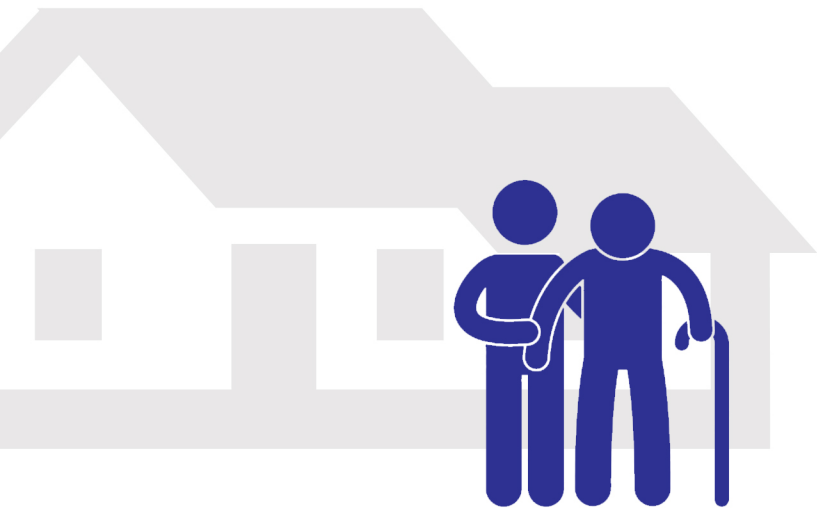
### Stages

Dr. Dana Turnball, Ph.D., a Psychologist focused in Clinical Psychology, has written extensively about the process seniors should go through to fully adjust and accept a moving transition:

**1. Anticipatory Stage** - This is the decision and preparation stage prior to relocation. It includes discussions about moving, exploration of senior living communities, financial planning, packing and space planning, etc.

**2. Impact Stage** - During this stage the physical relocation occurs. It includes the actual move, transfer of services (such as telephone and cable services, change of address, etc.), and unpacking.

**3. Long-term adjustment stage** - Also called the settling-in stage, it includes introductions to other residents and staff as well as personal emotional reactions to the new environment.



These tips help to ensure that lines of communication are open and caregivers are establishing expectations. Easing psychosocial stress is of utmost importance when relocating an older adult. Utilizing the assistance of social services and/or senior move managers can reduce stress and therefore, the risk of Relocation Stress Syndrome.

## Stress Minimization

If your loved one is moving, there are steps you can take to ease the stress of relocation.

According to licensed clinical social worker Tracy Mintz, the following five tips can minimize the stress of relocation:

1. Plan the move as a collaborative team; include those who will be closely tied to the senior during the impact and adjustment stages
2. Don't assume the senior can't participate -- keep them as involved as possible in decision making
3. Check in with the senior regularly after the move
4. Validate the senior's feelings and openly address concerns
5. Keep relevant doctors informed of changes that are happening

## Utilize local resources to help

Certified Professional Organizer and Abundance Organizer Partner Mindy Godding has identified three ways a professional organizer or move manager simplifies a move and eases the stress a senior is facing. First, they blend the old and new spaces to create some familiarity and provide a seamless transition. Move managers will often take pictures of the old space and try to replicate it in the new space. Second, the organizer and/or move manager alleviates stress by taking over the planning and timelines, and acting as an advocate for the senior, making sure their voice is heard. Third, they take time to help the senior get acquainted with the new space. Whether it's learning to work the dishwasher or getting familiar with new technology, these small details matter very much to a senior attempting to regain control and comfort in their new home.



## About Moves for Seniors

Moves for Seniors is a professional moving services company specializing in the needs of seniors planning to relocate, family members and caregivers who need logistical assistance, and senior living communities alike. We provide customized moving solutions that are simple, stress-free, comforting, and pleasant. Everything we do is done with seniors and their families in mind.

Moves for Seniors has a nationwide network of licensed and insured movers and strong partnerships with the National Association of Senior Move Managers and the National Association of Professional Organizers. We understand the unique challenges associated with senior relocation and specialize in stress-reducing moving services.

Moves for Seniors offers a full range of moving solutions for seniors, their families, and communities. If your loved one or senior community needs quality movers that truly care, Moves for Seniors is here to help.

Give our friendly Senior Move Specialists a call at (800) 227-0515 to get a free quote. Or learn more at [movesforseniors.com](https://movesforseniors.com)

## Other tips to ease the transition

- If the senior is able, encourage them to participate in social events or classes in their new community.
- When possible, arrange outings with family to favorite restaurants, museums, etc.
- Bring family and friends to visit, play cards, and just spend time with the senior. Keep things as normal as possible.
- Depend on community services and don't be afraid to voice comments or concerns.

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