



Making a Successful Transition to Assisted Living

By Janice Martin, Owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida

Despite great communication with a community, conversations with families regarding realistic expectations, notifying other professionals involved with the move, etc., there is always a struggle when a new resident moves to an assisted living community. This is particularly compounded when there is an overwhelmed elderly spouse or no family nearby for support. When the spouse is stressed with this enormous change and worry for their loved one, it's no surprise that there will be problems adjusting.

Before the move even takes place, there is stress about what to bring. Sometimes the community will provide a list of suggestions. But there are often small but important details that are forgotten. Many people assume the community will provide a shower chair or a raised toilet seat, but they do not. The need for a laundry basket, trash cans, and shower curtains are often forgotten. The community will usually provide toilet paper, but there's never enough and it's often a scratchy one-ply that most people don't like – so bring a supply of your own! Senior Liaison has created a helpful checklist that is available by reaching out to us at the contact information provided at the end of this article.

It is critical to label everything! Even glasses, shoes, pocketbooks, cell phones, etc. Get a label maker and markers in a variety of colors (to use on both dark and light clothing), or iron on tapes with the resident's name. Don't put the room number because it could change. Use the first initial and last name at a minimum in case there may be others with the same name. Label the trash cans and the hamper, too. If it leaves the apartment, make sure it's labeled. Things get innocently left in the common areas or other resident's rooms. With hundreds of residents in the same building, it's impossible for staff to remember what belongs to whom.

Communities have protocols in place to assist new residents on move in day. They try hard to introduce them to their new home, other residents, staff, and schedules. They may leave notes and reminders of meal times, laundry and cleaning days, shower days, etc. But in the chaos surrounding the move, information is quickly forgotten.

Things tend to go well on the first day. The staff is smiling and welcoming and everyone tries to accommodate requests to help to ensure that the new family is happy. And then what? The second day comes, and another new resident may be moving in that takes the attention of all the staff that was so helpful the day before.



The family probably visited several communities and looked at a number of different apartment options at each place. Now that they have moved in, they are completely disoriented. Nothing is familiar. Where is the dining room from my apartment? Where are the mailboxes? How do I find a care person? Where is the elevator? How will I find my way back? Even when the family is local, they often become frustrated waiting in the apartment for someone to show them around. If you feel you need some reorientation, please go to the concierge and request someone to help.

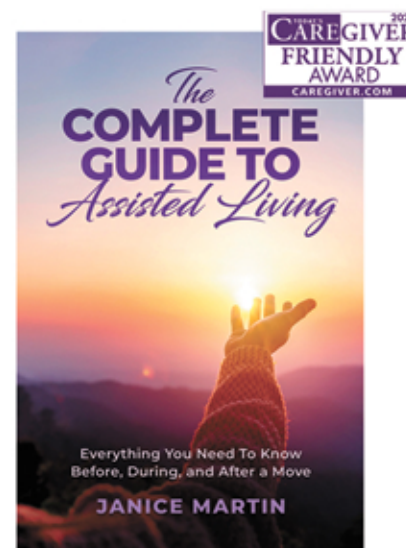
Some communities have a wonderful ambassador program, and this makes a world of difference. Ambassadors are residents who are familiar with the community and other residents. They drop by to introduce themselves, show their new friend the layout of the community, invite them to activities and join them, introduce them to other residents, and join them for meals.

In some circumstances, Senior Liaison of Central Florida may offer a unique service to provide a private caregiver from a local home care company to spend 4 hours a day for the first 3 days at no additional cost to help ensure nothing falls through the cracks. The companion will show them around the community, make sure they are getting their medication and showers as scheduled, that the bed is made, and trash is removed daily. They can reassure the resident and report back to family on how their loved one is adjusting. This service is critical when there is no family or friends to help and especially if there are any challenges related to dementia.

Another stumbling block is having hospital beds or wheelchairs delivered in a timely manner. Also, scheduling outside nursing care or starting physical therapy is often delayed. In order to begin therapy, doctor's orders must be received, and this can take several days. If the new resident is coming from rehab, this may go more smoothly – but not always! It depends upon receiving the appropriate orders, getting insurance approval, and of course paperwork.

Remember to always ask if you have a special request. If there is something special you would like for dinner and it's not on the menu – please ask. If it's available, they will try to honor your request immediately or have it for you for the next dinner. If you have special food allergies or requests, please remind them several times until they remember. They may not clean as you would or fold your clothes or make your bed as you prefer. Rather than get angry, share with them what you like. If you don't have the same staff person at each meal or providing care, it may be necessary to share your request several times. Remember, they have many people with different care needs and preferences to serve.

Living in a community is a drastic change from home. Things don't happen immediately, test results take longer than anticipated, and call bells may take longer depending upon staffing and the care needs of other residents. In assisted living there is no one on one attention like at home. It will take time to adjust. Patience, a smile, and a positive attitude will make a world of difference!



Janice Martin is an author, educator, and specialist on senior living options and the owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida Inc. She has written "The Complete Guide to Assisted Living: Everything You Need to Know Before, During, and After a Move." This award winning and #1 best seller is available on Amazon.com in paperback and eBook. For more information, call 352-477-1866 or email SeniorLiaisonCFL@gmail.com.



352-477-1866 | seniorliaisoncfl.com
seniorliaisoncfl@gmail.com