



# TENDING THE VINEYARD

## Stewardship of Religious Property

### **FIVE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE RELOCATION PROCESS**

Is relocating senior members to a non-congregational facility under consideration at your community? Below are some tips and insights from religious institutes that have completed the process.

#### **1. Communicate! Communicate! Communicate!**

Communication should start when the community first begins to consider alternative care options and continue after the last member has transitioned to the new facility. Develop a strategy for how information will be distributed and feedback gathered. Recognize that the terminology and information will be new for many and may require multiple explanations. Be sure to keep lay staff updated and try to frame discussion and decision making in the context of prayer.

#### **2. It takes a village.**

Relocation is a huge undertaking! Consider establishing a committee dedicated to researching options, creating a timeline, and presenting recommendations to the community. Alternatively, hire a consultant or eldercare professional to guide the process. Not only can this person handle much of the legwork, but his or her expertise can help avoid costly mistakes and short-sighted planning.

#### **3. Get help! Professional legal and financial guidance are a necessity.**

Closing a facility is an extremely complicated process. Strategies for severance packages and the reduction of staff must be created and plans established to reuse, repurpose, or donate equipment, furnishings, and supplies. Consider contacting other area healthcare facilities for information and advice.

#### **4. Establish a team to handle the practical and pastoral details of the relocation.**

If the staff and administrative team of your congregational facility have been with your community for a long time, they may want to see members through the transition. Otherwise, it is wise to establish a small committee or group to oversee the move and coordinate the multitude of details involved with packing, transportation, and settling in at the new facility. Devote special attention to pastoral care—a process that should begin long before moving day, continue through the transition period, and provide for ongoing connection with the community.

#### **5. Move frailest members first and schedule moves carefully.**

As the census in your congregational facility drops, so will the number of available staff. Move frailest members first to ensure they have access to the care they need. Wherever possible, try to relocate at least two members at a time and consider creating some type of good-bye ritual or gathering for the day before the move. Finally, it may not be possible to relocate all members at the same time. Recognize the anxiety this may produce for those left “waiting” and be prepared to address their concerns.

If your community is considering a move and has questions or needs advice, please contact the NRRO.

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The full issue of this newsletter may be viewed at:

<http://www.usccb.org/about/national-religious-retirement-office/upload/NRRO-Newsletter-Spring-2015.pdf>