

Avery Veterans' Corner

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Elderly parent care — When it's time to leave home

The decision about whether an elderly veteran should move is often tricky and emotional. Each family will have its own reasons for wanting (or not wanting) to take such a step. One family may decide a move is right because the parents can no longer manage the home. For another family, the need for hands-on care in a long-term care facility motivates a change.

In the case of long-distance caregivers, the notion of moving can seem like a solution to the problem of not being close enough to help. For some caregivers, moving a sick or aging parent to their own home or community can be a viable alternative. Some families decide to have an adult child move back to the parent's home to become the primary caregiver.

Keep in mind that leaving a home, community and familiar medical care can be very disruptive and difficult for the older parent, especially if they are not enthusiastic about the change. You might first want to explore what services are available in your parents' community to help them in their home — including home health care, housekeeping, personal care and transportation services.

Older adults and their families have some options when it comes to deciding where to live, but these choices can be limited by factors such as illness, ability to perform activities of daily living (for example, eating, bathing, using the toilet, dressing, walking and moving from bed to chair), financial resources and personal preferences.

Making a decision that is best for your parent—and making that decision with your parent—can be difficult. Try to learn as much as you can about possible housing options.

Older adults, or those with serious illness, can choose to: a) Stay in their own home or move to a smaller one b) Move to an assisted-living facility c) Move to a long-term care facility d) Move in with a family member.

Some families find a conference call is a good way to talk together about the pros and cons of each option. The goal of this call is to come up with a plan that works for everyone, especially your parent. If the decision involves a move for your mom or dad, you could, even from a distance, offer to arrange tours of some places for their consideration.

Experts advise families to think carefully before moving an aging adult into an adult child's home. There are a lot of questions to consider. For example, is there space in your home? Is someone around to help the older person during the whole day? What are your parents able to do for themselves? What personal care are you willing and able to provide — moving your parent from a chair to a bed or toilet, changing adult diapers, or using a feeding tube, for example? What kinds of home care services are available in your community? What kind of specialized medical care is available nearby?

For Internet assistance, go to your local county library.

For questions concerning veteran's benefits and to obtain needed forms call Georgia Henry, Avery County Veterans Service Office, at (828) 733-8211.

Comments and suggestions on the Veterans' Corner or Disabled American Veterans can be emailed to Jim Sramek at averycountyveterans@gmail.com.