

# CAREER PRO news

## **Senior Move Managers Provide Smooth Moves**

Moving to a new home can be tough. It takes a lot of energy -- physical, mental and emotional energy. There are so many details and so much uncertainty. This burden can be especially heavy for seniors.

Fortunately, there's a new group of professionals coming to the rescue. They call themselves senior move managers. And there is a growing need for their services. That's because since seniors are a rapidly growing segment of our society.

However, whether you can find enough clients to make a career as a senior move manager will depend on many factors, such as your marketing skills and your ability to relate to seniors.

Vicky Riley Keyes is a senior move manager. She says attitude is important.

"Empathy, patience, a warm and caring personality and experience working with seniors," are essential in this field, says Riley Keyes. If you can offer these things, you'll get a lot of gratitude from your clients. "It's very satisfactory offering a service that people really appreciate," she says.

Bill Lehman is a senior move manager in Minnesota. He says the ideal person for this career is, "organized, caring and compassionate." He says the field has its challenges, but there are great rewards.

"It's the personal satisfaction of helping people through a process they otherwise couldn't do, because their family is unwilling or unable to help...and the look on their faces when they walk into an apartment that hours earlier was empty and now it's put together with everything put away."

Senior move managers help seniors with many different tasks. Before the move, they help their clients plan and prepare to move. When is the best time to move? How many of their belongings will fit in the new home? What should be done with all the extra stuff? What new items need to be purchased? These are just a few of the questions that need to be answered.

Once the plan is in place, senior move managers take action. They carefully pack and label boxes. They might hire a moving company, or they might do the move themselves. They might arrange to hold a sale of all the belongings that are no longer needed, or refer the client to an estate sale agent.

They will help with other details too, like handling changes of address and getting the phone line transferred. In short, they do everything necessary to ensure the move is as stress-free as possible.

The National Association of Senior Move Managers (NASMM) was started in 2003. It had 90 members in 2006, up from 50 members a year earlier. The association's members are located all across North America.

Peg Guild is the president of NASMM. She says demand is growing fast, but there's one big challenge: "Getting the awareness out, so potential clients know we exist and can look for someone in their area."

Susan Danick agrees. She's a senior move manager in Maryland. "I think the biggest hurdle is awareness," she says. "People say, 'I wish I knew about you five years ago, and I would have moved sooner.'"

Senior move managers rely a lot on word-of-mouth to find new clients. Websites are an important marketing tool. As well, some move managers give presentations at seniors' centers and community centers in order to raise awareness.

Guild says most senior move managers are in their 40s, 50s or 60s. Many have a background in social work, and some have worked in retirement communities. But this doesn't mean a younger person couldn't build a career in this area. "I think a younger person could do it," Guild says, "but it would take a bit of a mature worldview."

Senior move managers typically charge by the hour. Many give an estimate on the total before they start. The hourly rate is based on several factors. "A lot depends on the area you're in, the cost of living, and people's willingness to pay for the service," says Stan Watkins. He's a senior move manager.

Guild says hourly fees for senior move managers tend to range from \$30 to \$75 an hour. Her company has handled moves for as little as \$350 and as much as \$3,000. Watkins has heard of hourly rates ranging from \$25 to \$60. Riley Keyes charges by the project. She says the cost is typically \$1,900 and up, including the cost of the moving company.

Several factors are behind the growing demand for senior move managers. The big one is the growing senior population. According to the Administration on Aging, there were 36.3 million seniors in 2004. This represents an increase of 3.1 million (9.3 percent) since 1994.

Those considering offering services to this expanding segment of our society should be aware of the challenges. Seniors vary widely in their ability to deal with change and stress. Helping clients deal with that stress can be a difficult aspect of this career. Being sensitive and a good listener helps a lot.

Some seniors don't want to move, but have to for health or financial reasons. "They have typically been in their home 30, 40, 50 years, and changing that is difficult," says Lehman. "There are a lot of memories."

"We need to be good listeners," says Guild, "because our clients like to tell us the stories of their things. Sometimes, if they can tell that story one more time, it makes it easier to let go of the item. It's not just letting go of a home, it's changing the way you live."

## Net Sites

National Association of Senior Move Managers

*More info about this new profession, including a directory of senior move managers*

*<http://www.nasmm.com>*

Top Ten Downsizing and Moving Tips

*Tips from a senior move manager on how to have a smoother move*

*<http://www.assistedmoving.com/16301.html>*

Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics

*A detailed look at the fastest growing age group in the U.S.*