

## Moving with Children

Moving with children can present challenges. Children are leaving behind friends, familiar places and activities and need to adjust to a new home, neighborhood and school. Due to these changes, kids need caring adults to listen to their concerns and help them adjust.

A move can be broken down in three stages - with each stage offering an opportunity to ease the stress of the move for your child.

### Before the move

What is important to remember before the move is to keep children involved in the process and to keep communication lines open.

A few suggestions:

- Talk to your children openly, often and early about the move
- If possible, take your children to the new home and explore the neighborhood. If the new residence is too far to bring the children, take pictures of the new home, school and any other areas that could be of interest to them
- Allow for plenty of opportunities for your children to express their feelings about the move and share your own feelings as well
- Keep to your normal routine as much as possible
- Line up activities such as sports team, art classes, dance lessons in the new community before you move, which will help your children feel part of a group
- Help children prepare a list of phone numbers and addresses of important people in their lives so that they know they will be able to keep in touch after the move

### During the move

- Proper planning is key to ensure the move goes smoothly to keep stress levels at a minimum. Children pick up on parents' feelings so it is important to stay calm and as upbeat about the move as possible
- Try to stick to your normal routine, including mealtime, nap time and bedtimes
- Kids can be involved in the packing process. Have children pack a box with some of their special possessions. They may enjoy decorating the box!
- Don't pack their most treasured articles such as a special stuffed animal, or favorite books or beloved blankets. Keep these items with you to bring in the car or airplane on your way to your new home.

### After the move

- Get involved early in social activities such as church groups and activity clubs
- Explore the neighborhood together, check out local restaurants, shopping malls and parks
- Introduce yourselves to your neighbors and be on the lookout for neighborhood kids to introduce to your children
- Be particularly attentive to your child's behavior if he or she is having trouble adjusting. Signs of needing help include unusual academic difficulty, poor moods, a change in eating or sleeping habits, trouble making friends. Consult a guidance counselor, teacher, school principal or doctor if you need a referral to a specialist to help your child
- Be patient - it takes time to feel at home for both parents and children!

