



MOVING A LOVED ONE DURING COVID

I've been very concerned about my clients (and thousands of others living in a care setting) being kept "prisoner" in their rooms. You may already be aware that senior care settings are not allowing visitors, for fear of introducing COVID to the community, and many are keeping residents from interacting with each other. One might argue that if everyone lives in the same building, they are in a bubble already; still, many communities prefer to limit interaction between residents just in case a resident gets COVID.

A colleague, Kimberlee Foster, told me about a client of hers who recently moved her dad from a larger care home to a smaller one. Kimberlee put me in touch with her client who agreed to be interviewed. Below is our chat.

Meet Catalina Lozano. She has been caring for her 90-year-old father, Albert, for several years. Recently she moved him from a large assisted living community to a small six-bed care home. You may not be familiar with smaller care homes called "board and care homes" but they're another option. Both homes have the same license from the State of California and both are considered assisted living. The difference is size and, during COVID, face to face connection along with the added freedom of being outside of your room. Turns out, face to face connection is just what Albert needed.

Q: Catalina, what was life like at the larger assisted living home for your father?

A: Prior to COVID and the restrictions at the building, he was happy and getting good care. He was a social butterfly and enjoyed living there. He would get the day's activity calendar slipped under his door and neatly fold it to fit in his breast pocket. He'd refer to it throughout the day so he could be on time to attend many activities.

Then when COVID hit, he was confined to his room. Meals were served to residents in their rooms so social dining was gone. Activities were offered from a push cart, room to room, for individuals to partake, but again, he was alone doing them.

I understood what the rules were and keeping dad safe from COVID was paramount to me. I want to make it clear that I have no complaints about the staff or food or management of the

larger home. During COVID I was able to visit him once, we were separated by a fence. The home helped with FaceTime calls, too.

Q: What led to your decision to relocate your father?

A: I was feeling uneasy at changes I noticed but felt powerless to change the situation. On regular phone calls I could hear he was changing, getting a little dim.

I also noticed he was sleeping all the time and his affect wasn't as bright. He was barely walking, only a few steps from his bed to the chair and from his chair to the bathroom.

The staff decreased during COVID so meal times turned into dropping off a tray and leaving. Before the staff shortage, they would spend time talking with my dad when they brought each meal. Dad needed more time with others.

Then I came across an article in the San Francisco Chronicle '[Families fight for access to loved ones](#)' and recognized they were naming thoughts and concerns I had.

Q: Did you consider bringing him into the home of a relative instead of a trying a smaller care home?

A: Yes, my husband and I talked about bringing him to live with us but realized that we couldn't meet all his care needs.

Since Albert's second wife was already in a small care home and getting good care, we thought to call the owner and ask if he could move in also. Since his wife had a large room, they were able to share.

Q: How long did it take to move Albert and did the home require anything special before entry?

A: The owner asked for a COVID test and, as luck would have it, the home where he was had just tested all of its residents on a Monday and his negative result came in a few days later. He moved in on that Saturday; so, within a week he was in his new room.

Q: How is your dad doing in the new home?

A: He's doing really well. He likes being around other men as he dislikes "the hen club" and this home happens to have three other male residents. They sit at the table and chat before and after meals. He talks with staff as they make meals and watches movies in the living room. He is able to go in the garden and get some sun and exercise, too.

While Catalina has not yet visited her dad at the new home, she plans to, if the home will allow it with safe social distancing, perhaps in the back yard. For now, she rests easier, knowing he's

interacting with others many hours per day now. She hopes he will return to his previous level of physical and mental health.

Catalina knows the stars aligned to make the transition this easy and quick. She hopes other families gain hope from her story. If you're looking to move your relative, it will probably take a bit longer than a week, but a move is possible during these times.

There are many placement agencies to call in our county that can help with a move to a board and care home at *no charge to you*:

Placement Options (707) 570-0257
Senior Placement Services (707) 292-9998
Senior Care Authority (415) 302-2929
Tweeten Eldercare (707) 570-2589