

Relocation Issues for Kids

Every year, one out of five American families move. One of the most important issues to anyone with kids is their reaction to the news that they're moving, and their adjustment to the new home. Being informed is very important to children. One of the worst mistakes we can make as adults is to assume that kids don't care or won't understand the details. Keeping them "in the loop," consulting them about choices whenever possible, and including them in the family game plan will work wonders toward their adjustment.

Other factors depend on the child's age:

- **Preschool Children**
Kids under the age of six may worry about being left behind, or being separated from their parents. If you go on an orientation or house hunting trip beforehand without the children, it's important to reassure kids this age that you will be back; bring something unique back to them from the new town. It's very important for them to express their feelings and fears about the move. Give them a job to do -- have them be responsible for boxing up their favorite toys, and "labeling" their boxes with crayons and stickers.
- **Ages 6 to 12**
Elementary age kids are usually most concerned with how the everyday routines of their lives are going to change. Showing them pictures, videos and magazines of their new home will help a lot, especially if you can find new places in advance for the things they like to do. If your children take dance lessons, find and share information about the new dance studio they can go to. If they take karate, or play soccer...even if their favorite thing to do is go to the park or the pizza parlor, find these places in your new neighborhood and get brochures, pictures or videos.
- **Teenagers**
These kids are most concerned with fitting in. They may react angrily to the move, even insist they're not going. This is usually due to the total lack of control they have over everything important in their lives, friends, school and jobs, being disrupted. These children can be very worried about making new friends, and what will be different in the new school. They are curious about the clothing, hairstyles, bicycles, cars, etc. that kids in the new city will have. Pictures of all these things are very helpful, so if you take an orientation trip be sure to take many detailed photos/videos of the schools they will be attending.
- **Other tips for making the transition**
 - Give young children an entertaining travel kit for the move.
 - Give older children a diary for recording the trip and move.
 - Give children of all ages a special address book and stationary set for keeping up with old friends.
 - Take videos of the new home if the kids won't get to see it before the move. Arrive well before the movers so kids can explore and become acquainted first.
 - Give children a chore to do, such as working on their room (younger), supervising little siblings (middle), and painting or arranging furniture (older kids).
 - Take a break with the family as soon as possible to explore the museums, sights and recreation in your new city.
 - Arrange a visit to new schools and a meeting with the teacher before the actual first day of attendance.
 - Encourage the children to bring new friends home.