

Relocation Policies:

The Importance of Having a Policy and a Look at What Should Your Policy Contain

When you need to relocate an individual, everyone can have a pleasant experience or the entire process can become a nightmare. Unless yours is an organization that relocates hundreds of individuals every year, relocation is probably not a subject you spend a lot of time considering. Regardless of how many people you relocate, however, a well thought out, well-communicated policy will make your job easier and the entire task more manageable for all involved.

The most common relocations that take place within the legal community are those that involve new hires. In most cases these are young people, just graduating from law school, that your firm has sought to recruit. Your firm's relocation policy can actually serve as a recruiting tool, indicating to your potential new hire the level of professionalism and concern that your firm has for your people. Often a firm's relocation policy and what the firm provides in its relocation package will be the factors determining whether or not the firm will sign a much sought after new talent.

Taken from the standpoint of the individual being relocated, your organization's policy should clearly state what is and what is not provided. Any specific procedures, requirements, and/or limitations should be clearly communicated.

Having written procedures, policies, and provisions will eliminate any confusion

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A moving company offers advice to those who manage relocations for their firms....

for you, for the individual making the move, and for your moving company. A well-constructed policy will protect the firm from unanticipated expenses and, when communicated to your carrier, will ensure that only the services you intend for the relocating individual to receive are in fact provided.

Many firms have a tiered relocation policy. Provisions for new hires, associate, and partner relocations may vary dramatically. The needs of a recent college graduate will vary from the needs of well-established associates or partners. A written policy pertaining to each tier of employee that the firm may ask to relocate should be a tool that you have readily available.

To help you get started or to assist you in evaluating existing policies, here is a list of topics that should be addressed in your relocation policy:

- What is the firm's policy on carrier packing (full, partial, fragile-breakables only, material supply only, etc.)?
 - What items will the firm specifically not pay for (e.g., a second auto, a spouse's business materials, boats, motorcycles, etc.)?
 - What is the firm's position on paying for carrier liability — or what carrier liability is provided?
 - What is the firm's position on storage in transit? (Will the firm pay for it, how long will storage be covered, where should household goods be stored?)
 - What is the firm's position on appliance servicing, transportation of pets, special crating, or third-party services, extra pick-ups, or deliveries?
 - What is the firm's position on financial assistance to relocating employees? (I.e., Which, if any, costs are covered — cost of living allowances, house hunting trips, decorating expenses, closing costs reimbursements, tax assistance on capital gains, moving expense deductions, etc.?)
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- What carrier is to be utilized?
 - What is the procedure for initiating a move with your carrier?
 - What is required as far as an estimate or survey of the move?
 - Are there any weight or dollar limitations?

The days of getting three estimates and turning in the bill when the move is over are long gone. NALP has partnered with three long-term, well-proven moving companies that have worked with many NALP members. The professionals at any of these companies would be happy to work with you in developing a relocation policy that is right for you and your firm. ■

