

# Care & Caregivers

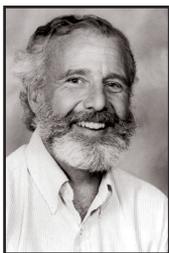
In the missions community, care of personnel is the fulfillment of our mandate and the natural expression of our fellowship. It is, of course, more than just protection against financial loss or safeguarding our investments. Such care is not an event, nor is it necessarily automatic. Rather, it is an intentional, planned, and ongoing flow which occurs throughout missionary life.

## Stage 1: Recruitment

Key to good recruitment is "honesty in advertising." The likely cost must be spelled out, as well as the needs and rewards. Jesus directs His disciples to count the cost before building a tower. This does not mean that a high cost precludes building the tower, but rather by counting the cost one avoids discouraging and destructive surprises.

## Stage 2: Screening

The agency should be seeking the best possible people to do the task. Candidates need to meet basic requirements, but the agency should acknowledge that recruits will grow and learn with time and experience. The agency needs to be protected from bad choices for the sake of itself and its existing teams, as well as for the sake of those who will be served. . . . For those who are probable candidates and potential personnel, there is... an important screening process that is called "screening in,"... designed to discover as much as possible about each individual, in order to direct and place each one (and the entire family) wisely and then to deliver appropriate care and support throughout their entire life experience....



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## Stage 3: Preparation and Pre-Field Departure

Pre-departure orientation, properly developed, should accomplish several objectives. First, it should assist people in "leaving right." Leaving right is key to entering right and to the correct process of reentering when one returns to the place of origin. Secondly, this experience should assist in developing and defining expectations that are both realistic and sufficiently positive. Thirdly, the orientation should help develop a frame of reference that provides basic understanding of one's own reactions and responses to the new environment and helps to develop a positive attitude toward good adjustment and ability to learn....

## Stage 4: Departure

An important aspect of the pre-field experience is the opportunity for proper farewells. The commissioning of missionaries is an important step in the process, but often the less formal aspects of departure are just as critical. Being certain that a "RAFT" [Reconciliation of unresolved conflicts, Affirmations, Farewells, Thinking about the new destination] is built to help one get to the new location is important....

## Stage 5: Arrival

Probably the most important aspect of arriving is to have healthy, proactive mentors. A mentor, who is an important type of caregiver, performs two tasks. First of all, mentors introduce the culture to the newcomer. They answer questions that are asked and questions that should have been asked.

They make suggestions, correct errors, and generally guide through the uneasy experience of being foreign. The second task of mentors is to introduce the newcomer to the community. Sometimes this is accomplished automatically by virtue of the mentor's reputation, which can open relationships to others, while at other times the mentor must actively introduce the newcomer....

## Stage 6: Field Life

Specialists with knowledge and experience in the international and missions community are critical in providing a flow of adequate care. A flow of caregivers who can deliver care through their specialties of medicine, psychology, crisis intervention, pastoral care, team building, conflict management, education, training, fiscal support, and career development across mission agency lines is necessary.

## Stage 7: Preparation for Returning "Home"

For many, the process of returning to one's "home" country is more challenging than moving to a new one. Also, for many the first such transition comes as a shock. Preparation for this change is both loving and necessary. The same process of leaving right via a "RAFT" is necessary for returning right.... Another part of repatriation includes the preparation of those receiving the overseas sojourner. Neal Pirolo (2000) in his book *The Reentry Team* uses the model of the church of Antioch as the basis for forming both right perspectives and right plans for healthy missionary reentry....

## Stage 8: Reentry

...Mentors are vital to reentry support. The healthiest and most helpful people should be invited to be mentors for adults and young people alike. The role of mentors is to inform, answer questions, and give guidance to returnees.

## Stage 9: Ongoing Support

There are at least three special categories of people in the missions community who should have specialized and ongoing support. They are the "beginners" [third-culture kids], the "finishers" [retiring missionaries and others concluding their missionary careers for other reasons], and the "injured" [physically, psychologically, or spiritually].... 🌐