



When Family Members Conflict About a Senior Loved One's Home Sale

The journey of assisting a senior through a home sale involves many steps. With professional guidance and time to plan it out, it is a process that can be carried out successfully.

Complications of the sale can be caused by the condition of the home, or the seniors' health or financial needs. But the majority of obstacles that delay, prevent, or turn a senior's home sale upside down are often caused by the senior's family. To elder care professionals, family is the "wild card" of working with seniors: unpredictable, sometimes frustrating, and other times very positive. Unfortunately, family can be the one factor preventing a senior from moving to a safer, healthier environment, even when the senior wishes to do so.

Consider Bert, whose home was being held up by a tree stump in the basement. The house was slowly caving inwards. It had a giant gaping hole in the kitchen ceiling, and it was not safe to live here. Bert wanted to move, but his daughter, who wanted to inherit the house when he passed away, kept real estate agents far from him with aggressive threats.

Another example is Mrs. Ellington, who lived in a massive colonial home. She had purchased a condominium so that she could sell her home and downsize to a simpler life. Her grandson, a recently minted PhD who lived in a tented corner of her basement, prevented the sale so that he could continue his low-cost living arrangement there.

There are seniors who have warring factions in their family, who are unable to agree even while the senior declines in health. We've seen adult sons try to "remodel" their parents' home, costing months of lost time and thousands of dollars, and creating an un-sellable home. SASH assisted a senior whose homeless daughter pitched a tent in the yard, and was using drugs there all the way to the closing date of the sale.

Families are all unique, and the stories could fill volumes. However, one theme remains the same in SASH's service to seniors. We encourage families to put aside differences, personal motives, and individual



needs, and **focus on the well-being of the senior loved one** in what could be the final months or years of his or her life. If you are struggling through a similarly frustrating situation, these questions might help:

1. Where and how will the senior loved one receive the best care?
2. Does the sale of the home create resources to provide this care for the senior?
3. What can the family do to rally around the senior loved one for the best outcome?

If conflict is unresolved, consider hiring a social worker in gerontology, a geriatric care manager, or another elder care professional who is experienced in navigating a family through the decisions of the senior's care. In the end, what matters most is what leads to the senior's health, happiness, and well being.

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