

Relocation Rx

By David Corrigan and Dan Burke



Corrigan



Burke

While improving economic circumstances have spurred a larger number of commercial relocations and renovations recently, the robust market for healthcare industry relocations has been driven by more than just financial considerations. Part of it is market-driven, of course, as different organizations compete for consumer dollars, but healthcare interests are on the move for a host of different reasons, ranging from provider/network consolidation to evolving healthcare service trends. The industry is simultaneously getting larger, with the influx of large hospital-style facilities, and smaller, with the growth of single-service providers such as radiologists or surgery centers. Many researchers know all too well how the intermittent and uncertain nature of grant-based funding can necessitate moving labs from one facility to another. With all of this facility evolution going on, moving in a safe, efficient and cost-effective manner is more important than ever.

While all commercial moves, renovations or expansions can pose significant logistical concerns, healthcare organizations and facilities are faced with a particularly diverse and daunting array of industry-specific considerations. From expensive equipment and sensitive/dangerous materials to patient confidentiality and compliance requirements, healthcare moves are awash in complex technical, legal and safety concerns. The complexity grows as you explore the various facilities in question, ranging from patient treatment areas to medical file storage facilities and research laboratories. Healthcare organizations looking to relocate, even temporarily for a renovation or an improvement project, need to have a firm understanding of those challenges and the accompanying solutions before embarking on this significant undertaking.

Meeting these challenges (and identifying a relocation vendor with the necessary expertise in this highly specialized field) can save healthcare organizations time and money. What follows are the

tips, best practices and key considerations on which decision-makers at healthcare organizations should be focused when they are considering a move.

Vetting Vendors

As important as it is to choose the right moving partner, it is surprising how often this decision is made without fully vetting the candidates. Working with a reputable and dependable provider is always important, but with healthcare moves it is essential. The specialized equipment and expertise required to operate in a healthcare facility and to handle the logistical and operational complexities of a healthcare move are far beyond the capabilities of the average commercial mover. In addition to cultivating a healthy skepticism of sales pitches that seem a little too good to be true, healthcare organizations should ask for and receive verifiable references from prospective moving partners—including lists of comparable previous moves and clients. Because the moving company's employees in many cases will have access to sensitive substances and areas with safety and patient privacy concerns, healthcare organizations should ensure that their relocation partners utilize criminal background and drug testing programs, require their employees to be fully uniformed with photo IDs, and demonstrate an awareness of, and familiarity with, the mandates and restrictions associated with HIPAA regulations.

Specialized Skills and Services

Damage to the property, premises or furniture and equipment being moved is a concern in any move. In a medical move scenario, the stakes may be even higher. The unique, sensitive and highly specialized equipment found in hospitals and research facilities—centrifuges, incubators, expensive microscopes, large diagnostic

machines—can cost staggering sums of money to replace or repair if damaged. These are situations where a hand truck just will not cut it; specialized moving equipment often is required.

Because the equipment is not just expensive but also frequently very heavy, additional care must be taken to ensure safety and facility preservation. Moving professionals may need to work closely with facilities managers when moving extremely heavy equipment. Not only can facilities managers help determine the best possible route for the equipment to leave the building, but they may even need to check structural specifications and engineering tolerances to make sure that the hallway can take the weight. Hazardous materials are another consideration. Because many pieces of equipment cannot be moved until they have been officially decontaminated and certified as such, the moving team needs to know to look for and recognize the appropriate documentation and authentication. Healthcare organizations can provide themselves with additional security and peace of mind by asking for a certificate of insurance (with their institution/organization listed as an additional insured party) from their relocation specialist.

Coordination and Complexity

Because the resources and industry expertise required to successfully move a healthcare facility are so demanding and specific, there are relatively few experienced commercial relocation companies with proven healthcare experience. The best relocation experts have not only the people and the equipment required to get the job done, but they also have the capability to act as a project manager of sorts: scheduling, coordinating and communicating with all parties involved in the move. A large commercial move takes precise timing, strategic coordination and careful planning, with the preservation of operational integrity and minimal patient impact as key priorities. Your partner should be not just accommodating and professional but also adaptable: able to adjust to unanticipated or last-minute changes or delays and to handle inevitable hiccups with constructive creativity. Generally speaking, the preparation timeline for a healthcare move will require approximately double the planning and communication windows of a more traditional commercial relocation.

The right relocation specialist is comfortable working alongside other vendors, such as technicians and/or biosafety experts who may be decontaminating, disconnecting, dismantling and/or preparing equipment for the move. An experienced relocation professional capable of integrating a multitude of different timelines, priorities and considerations into a relocation plan that accommodates operational and logistical elements and creates a carefully orchestrated and collaborative move is both very rare and very valuable. In addition, because the attitude and professionalism of the relocation team are exceptionally important in a hospital or healthcare environment, healthcare organizations should emphasize the importance of patient awareness and sensitivity and should attempt to work with moving professionals who have established a reputation for being solicitous and thoughtful. In healthcare moves, it is about much more than just packing and moving boxes—it is about understanding the unique sensitivities and priorities of a medical environment. Part of that sensitivity often involves medical records and privacy concerns. HIPAA regulations mandate that patient records must be secured at all times and can never be left unattended—make certain that your relocation partner has a plan in place to secure and safeguard any records while maintaining HIPAA compliance.

For healthcare organizations actively considering a relocation or renovation, it all really boils down to one all-encompassing priority: identifying and retaining the right relocation vendor—an experienced professional outfit with the demonstrated skill set, personnel and resources required to successfully execute a complex healthcare move. Understanding why the right partner is so important, what to look for and how to select an experienced medical move specialist can make a million-dollar difference for a hospital or a healthcare organization.

David Corrigan serves as president and COO and Dan Burke is the director of business development for Corrigan Moving Systems, a Michigan-based relocation company dedicated to elevating the moving experience for families and businesses. Corrigan also serves as director of Corrigan Integrated Office Solutions. Corrigan can be reached at dcorrigan@corriganmoving.com, and Burke is available at dburke@corriganmoving.com.
