



June 28, 2010

## Did you ever have a houseguest hassle? Mel wants to know

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Evelyn Evans of North Fort Myers recently sent me an e-mail asking about letting someone stay at your home.

Evans wanted to know what would happen if you wanted the person to leave and they wouldn't go.

Evans was asking because she had invited a woman she knew to stay with her and look for a job in Fort Myers. After her daughters raised objections to the plan, saying their mom might have to evict the woman or hire a lawyer if she decided to overstay her welcome, Evans rescinded the invitation. But she felt bad about it. Had she done the right thing?

Any time a senior (Evans is 75) gets approached by a person she hasn't heard from in decades, my guard goes up. And if the person also just happens to be down on her luck? My initial reaction was, "No way would I let that woman stay at my house."

Evans, however, wasn't mistrustful of the woman's motives. She was, however, worried that if she did misjudge her and wanted her to leave, would she have to go to court?

Angela Larson, supervisor of the Seniors Crime Assistance Unit at the Collier County Sheriff's Office, didn't sound supportive of the idea.

"You definitely have to be careful who you let into your home," Larson said. "Despite best intentions, things can go wrong."

Larson said she has seen situations where even adult children have taken advantage of their parents in these situations. She's seen hired caretakers, too, who have moved in and exploited a senior.

If you do let someone move in, Larson said, keep track of your finances and your valuables. And clearly define what their role is in the home and the length of time you expect them to stay. And, she said, don't let a person staying with you have access to your bank account.

Larson understands why Evans might be sympathetic to a person in need, but, she said, "Maybe she could find a better way to help than letting her move in."

Kevin F. Jursinski, a Florida board certified real estate attorney, didn't endorse the idea of the move-in, but said the legalities of a removal aren't that complicated.

If there was no written agreement and Evans rescinded the offer to stay, then the person is trespassing Jursinski said.

If the woman pays rent, it's a month-to-month oral lease agreement, and 15 days before the end of

the month Evans could give her notice to move and evict her if she doesn't.

Still, I feel stumped by what to tell Evans. If I were told to move from someone's home, I'd leave quickly and voluntarily. And I think I'd have no trouble kicking out a freeloader. But maybe I'm wrong about how difficult this situation can be.

So I'm calling on readers to help.

Has a guest or roommate in your home ever overstayed his or her welcome? If so, what did you do to get rid of them? And what do you think Evans should do?

Write me or send an e-mail putting "unwelcome guest" in the subject line.

I'll print some of the responses and suggestions in an later column.

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