Questions to Ask Series
When Selecting Assisted Living & Higher Levels of Care
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Introduction

Deciding where to live as one age’s presents new challenges for many seniors. Anticipating and planning for this stage of life is difficult because how well we will age and how long we will live is unpredictable. Average life expectancy is lengthening, increasing the potential for chronic health conditions that may threaten independence. The most important factors for evaluating housing options is becoming familiar with the variety of senior housing choices and the health and mobility criteria for living in these various types of senior housing levels. Another important factor to consider is that many senior housing locations have waiting lists; starting your search early before the actual need arises is very helpful. You can often put your name or a loved one's name on a waiting list to plan ahead and hopefully avoid a crisis.

General Advice

Here are some questions to consider when looking for senior housing. It is important to trust your feelings and reactions when interviewing a location. The following questions are just suggestions. Take the time to consider what your personal needs are and have a family member or friend available to help evaluate responses. Researching online and then follow up phone interviews is a good start but take the time to meet in person.

Starting a Search for senior housing:

1. Start your search by using the Internet and look at websites like SeniorsResourceGuide.com to find local companies and learn about service options.

2. Follow up with a phone call to the companies that interest you.

3. Listen and evaluate advice from your doctor, senior professionals and the companies you are interviewing.

4. Schedule a meeting at the senior housing location and take a tour.

5. If the services are for an older relative, try to involve them in the final selection if possible.
General Suggestions for choosing senior housing

1. Try not to make a hasty decision.

2. Try to get family or friends to help evaluate the options.

3. Trust your feelings and reactions when interviewing a company.

4. Ask for references.

5. Take the time to review company materials.

6. Ask many questions.

7. Be sure that you understand pricing.

8. Do not sign any contract until you thoroughly understand pricing and have reviewed the contract in detail.

General Suggestions – Consider calling a Housing Specialist or Referral & Caregiving Resource for Assistance. These professionals are listed on SeniorsResourceGuide.com.
Questions to Ask … When Selecting Assisted Living & Higher Levels of Care

1. What is the admission criterion for assisted living? __________________________________________
   (or skilled nursing, Alzheimer’s assisted living, etc) _______________________________________

2. What size are the rooms? ________________________________________________________________
   Semi-private room (shared room), private room, studio, 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom ________________

3. What is the starting price? _______________________________________________________________

4. What services are included in the price? ____________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

5. What services are excluded in the price? ____________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

6. Do you have a wait list? __________________________________________________________________

7. Is there age restriction? __________________________________________________________________

8. What is the number of units? (Or for a nursing home number of beds?) __________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

9. Is the community a continuum of care community (CCRC)? ________________________________

10. Is there memory care onsite? __________________________________________________________________

11. Is there a nursing home onsite? __________________________________________________________________

12. Is there Alzheimer’s Assisted Living onsite? ________________________________________________

13. Is there Alzheimer’s Skilled Nursing onsite? ________________________________________________

14. What is the meal plan like? ______________________________________________________________

15. What is the activity program like? _________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

16. Are there activities in the facility for residents? _____________________________________________

17. Are there outside activities planned for residents? _____________________________________________

18. Is there housekeeping service? __________________________________________________________________

19. Is there laundry service? __________________________________________________________________

20. Is the location handicap accessible? __________________________________________________________________

21. Is there scheduled transportation? __________________________________________________________________

22. Are pets allowed? __________________________________________________________________

23. Is the skilled facility Medicare certified? __________________________________________________________________

24. Is the skilled facility Medicaid certified? __________________________________________________________________

25. Does the skilled facility accept Veteran benefits? __________________________________________________________________

26. Is the facility licensed? __________________________________________________________________

27. What is the rating of the facility concerning their license? __________________________________________________________________
28. How is the unused portion of the rent handled upon leaving? ____________________________
29. What are the reasons for which I could be discharged? ________________________________
30. Are their private and/or semi-private rooms? _______________________________________
31. Are the bathrooms private or shared? ______________________________________________
32. Is there a call system? __________________________________________________________
33. Is there a care plan? _____________________________________________________________
34. Is my personal family physician involved with my care? ______________________________
35. Is their transportation to doctors and other medical appointments? ______________________
36. Can family share a meal with the resident at the facility? ______________________________
37. What is provided with the assisted Living lifestyle? __________________________________
38. What is an extra cost with the assisted living lifestyle? ________________________________
39. What is the ratio of staff to resident? ______________________________________________
40. How are special diets handled? _____________________________________________________
41. Are snacks and beverages available between meals? _________________________________
42. Is cable television available? _____________________________________________________
43. How are resident telephone services handled? ________________________________________
44. Can I have a tour of the facility? __________________________________________________
45. Other ____________________________________________________________

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Definitions Important to Senior Housing, Assisted Living & Higher Levels of Care

**Active Independent Living**
Active independent living communities refer to retirement communities designed for active seniors. These communities usually feature low-maintenance apartments, condominiums, town homes, or ranch-style residences. Communities often are designed around recreational activities such as golf, swimming, boating, or fitness. Amenities vary between communities and may have age restriction covenants.

**Alzheimer's Assisted Living**
Alzheimer's assisted living provides 24-hour assistance with dressing, bathing, meals, medication monitoring, and transfer assistance. These large and small facilities have secure areas both inside and outside where residents are free to move about.

**Alzheimer's Skilled Nursing**
Alzheimer's skilled nursing provides long-term, 24-hour nursing care. This is the highest level of nursing care available outside of hospitalization. Some facilities accept only "non-wandering" Alzheimer's patients.

**Assisted Living**
Assisted living facilities offer an independent environment with 24-hour personal assistance. Several options are available: freestanding large facilities, personal care boarding homes, or continuum of care facilities. Services usually include communal meals, housekeeping, social activities, and assistance based on personal needs.

**Continuum of Care**
Continuum of care retirement communities offer several care levels at one location, from retirement housing through assisted living and skilled nursing. As your health needs change, you can move through the levels of care without relocating.

**Respite Care**
Respite care provides a period of relief for those giving constant care to an ill person.

**Retirement Communities**
Retirement communities offer apartment living on a rental basis. Communal dining and a full range of activities are available. Housekeeping, laundry, and assisted living services are sometimes available.

**Skilled Nursing**
Skilled nursing facilities are licensed to provide 24-hour medical services by registered nurses and other professionals for the chronically ill not requiring hospitalization. This is the highest level of nursing care available outside of hospitalization.

**Subsidized housing**
Subsidized housing is federally funded housing that provides low-income individuals and families the opportunity to rent safe, decent and affordable privately owned rental housing by supplementing what they could afford on their own. The rent is reduced based on a person's income. Examples include: housing authority offices where applications are processed, low-income senior apartments, section 8 housing, HUD housing, etc.

Link to a Glossary of Retirement Topics listed on SeniorsResourceGuide.com

Glossary of Terms
Definitions of Care Management & Housing Specialists

Care Management
Care management agencies and professional care managers can help evaluate, coordinate, or provide crisis intervention for seniors. They can assist seniors and their families by providing guidance in selecting and coordinating senior housing options, long-term care, in-home care and other related services. Many care managers can develop individualized care plans so the senior's needs are met as they change during the aging process.

Housing Specialist
Housing specialist offers advice and referral services to senior housing communities; some are at no charge to the individual.

Referral and Caregiving Resources
Referral and caregiving resources includes private, government and non-profit agencies that provide resources, guidance and/or assistance in selecting and coordinating senior housing options and resources for in-home care.
Other Resources

Assisted Living Senior Housing – “It is all in the name.”
Learn more about the terminology used in State Licensing Requirements for Assisted Living Facilities (ALF). Licensing requirements for Assisted Living Facilities - ALF are controlled at the State level. Each State has the control to select the terminology of how to refer to various types of Assisted Living Facilities – ALF’s in their state. Many states have slightly different names and definitions for Assisted Living Facilities – ALF’s in their State compared to other States. However, all of the states are referring to a similar “assisted living lifestyle” for seniors.
Learn more at SeniorsResourceGuide.com

Area Agencies on Aging – AoA
Administration on Aging is the Federal focal point and advocate agency for older persons and their concerns. AoA awards Older Americans Act funds for supportive home and community-based services to the State Units on Aging, located in every state and U.S. territory.
https://www.acl.gov/

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services - CMS
CMS administers Medicare and Medicaid health insurance programs. They have a through website and they support a TTY user phone system for the deaf and hard of hearing public.
www.cms.hhs.gov

Find your Local Area Agency on Aging through Eldercare Locator
The Eldercare Locator a service of U.S. Administration on Aging helps can connect you to your local Area Agency on Aging. Call 1-800-677-1116, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time.
www.eldercare.gov

HUD - Local Public Housing Agency – PHA
If you need public housing assistance or are looking for information about public housing programs such as housing choice vouchers you need to contact your local Public Housing Agency (PHA). HUD maintains a database for locating these agencies.
www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/index.cfm

Medicare.gov – Official U.S. Government Site for Medicare
Medicare wants to "help you help yourself" by using Medicare's information resources to answer your questions.
www.medicare.gov

US Department of Housing and Urban Development – HUD
Learn more about renting and HUD rental assistance programs. The HUD website has information for consumers and Public Housing Authorities (PHA). Public Housing Authorities are the local groups a person needs to contact to find out what public housing is available in your area.
www.hud.gov/apps/section8/
**Medicare.gov Nursing Home Compare**

Medicare.gov websites has a website with detailed information and quality ratings about Medicare and Medicaid-certified nursing home in the U.S. The Medicare and Medicaid-certified nursing homes can be located by name, zip code, city, state or county.

The website also has information on the nursing home quality rating, health inspections, nursing home staffing, quality measures, fire safety inspections, paying for nursing home care and alternatives to nursing homes.

[www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)

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**Have Questions?**

Contact SeniorsResourceGuide.com by email: SRGinfo@SeniorsResourceGuide.com or call us at 303-794-0799.

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This e-publication is available at [www.SeniorsE-Guide.com](http://www.SeniorsE-Guide.com)

**Contributors and Referral Resources for the Seniors E-Guide:**

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**NOTE:** This E-Guide was created for general information purposes only. It is not an official resource. Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy, we do not guarantee that there are no errors or omissions. Also be sure to check references and corroborate information from multiple sources.

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