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Seniors E-Guide

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

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Introduction

Deciding where to live as one ages and health changes, presents new challenges for many older adults. 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 to become 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 wait lists. So, start your search early before the actual need arises. You can often put your name or a loved one's name on a wait list to plan ahead and hopefully avoid a crisis decision.

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 and have a tour of the property.

Starting a Search for Senior Housing:

1. Look at the organization's website
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 on the care level they are recommending for your health care needs.
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.
9. For Senior Housing – see if you can spend the night or weekend at the property and have a meal with other residents. Assisted Living locations may have what is known as Respite Care, which is a short stay that gives a primary caregiver a break. This gives the older adult a chance to experience the community.
10. Consider working with a *Housing Specialist* or *Referral & Caregiving Resource Professional*.

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 skilled nursing or nursing home, the number of beds?) _____

9. Is the community a Life Plan Community (also known as
Continuum of Care Retirement 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 _____

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

Active Independent Living

Active independent living communities refers 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.

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.

Life Plan Community (also known as - Continuum of Care Retirement Community CCRC)

Life Plan Communities offer several care levels at one location, from active independent retirement housing through assisted living and skilled nursing and memory care. As your health needs change, you can move through the levels of care without relocating.

Memory Care Assisted Living

Memory Care assisted living provides 24-hour assistance with dressing, bathing, meals, medication monitoring, and transfer assistance for those suffering from some type of dementia. These large and small facilities have secure areas both inside and outside where residents are free to move about within the secured area.

Memory Care Skilled Nursing

Memory Care skilled nursing provides long-term, 24-hour nursing care to those suffering from some type of dementia. This is the highest level of nursing care available outside of hospitalization and it is very expensive and difficult to find. Older adults with dementia who have developed aggression are very difficult to place and often need to be medicated to protect the staff who cares for them.

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.

Medicare.gov Nursing Home Compare

Medicare.gov website has a section 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.

<https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/?providerType=NursingHome&redirect=true>

Website: <https://www.medicare.gov/>



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Have Questions?

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