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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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Developed and Hosted by www.SeniorsResourceGuide.com

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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.

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 for daily activities.

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.

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.
9. Consider calling a *Housing Specialist* or *Referral & Caregiving Resource* for Assistance. These professionals are listed on SeniorsResourceGuide.com.
10. Consider hiring a *Care Manager* to provide care oversight to the family and senior.

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. Are their private and/or semi-private rooms? _____
4. Are the bathrooms private or shared? _____
5. What is the starting price? _____
6. What services are included in the price? _____

7. What services are excluded in the price? _____

8. Are there care packages/levels of extra services available? _____

9. What are the move-in fees? _____
10. What is the deposit and is it refundable? _____
11. How often do rate increases occur and how large are they? _____
12. In the event of a critical life incident what happens to the lease obligation? _____

13. How is the unused portion of the rent handled upon leaving? _____
14. If a resident has to leave how much notice is given to the resident and their family? _____

15. What are the reasons for which a resident can be discharged? _____
16. Do you have a wait list? _____
17. Is there age restriction? _____
18. What is the number of units? (Or for a skilled nursing home number of beds?) _____

19. Is the community a continuum of care community (CCRC)? _____
20. Is there memory care onsite? _____
21. Is there a nursing home onsite? _____
22. Is there Alzheimer's Assisted Living onsite? _____
23. Is there Alzheimer's Skilled Nursing onsite? _____
24. Can I have a tour of the location? _____

Day to Day Life at the Location Questions

25. What does the dining area look like? _____
26. What type of meals are provided? _____
27. Can special diets be accommodated such as gluten free? _____
28. For those that can go to dining rooms, what time are meals served? _____
29. What type of snacks and beverages are available? _____
30. Is there a salon and barbershop onsite? _____
31. Are there activities in the facility for residents? _____
32. Are there outside activities planned for residents? _____
33. How is housekeeping service handled? _____
34. How is laundry service handled for each resident? _____

Transportation Questions

35. Is the location handicap accessible? _____
36. Is there scheduled transportation? _____
37. Is there transportation to and from doctor visits? _____

For Assisted Living Questions

38. How many residents are in this location? _____
39. What is provided with the assisted living lifestyle? _____

40. What is an extra cost with the assisted living lifestyle? _____

41. What is the ratio of staff to resident? _____
42. Is the facility licensed? _____
43. Is there a call system? _____
44. Is there a care plan? _____
45. Are there exercise facilities? _____
46. Is there a walk-in tub available? _____
47. Can the personal family physician be involved with the resident's care? _____
48. Can family share a meal with the resident at the facility? _____
49. Is there a salon and barbershop onsite? _____
50. Are there activities in the facility for residents? _____
51. Are there outside activities planned for residents? _____

- 52. Is cable television available and at what cost? _____
- 53. Is Internet service available and at what cost? _____
- 54. How are resident telephone services handled? _____
- 55. If the senior is a veteran have you researched the VA Aid & Attendance program and is this location familiar with these benefits? _____

- 56. What is the family visitation policy and hours? _____
- 57. Other _____

For Skilled Nursing Questions

- 58. What is the rating of the facility? _____
Check nursing home ratings online at www.Medicare.gov _____
- 59. How many residents are in this location? _____
- 60. Is the skilled facility Medicare certified? _____
- 61. Is the skilled facility Medicaid certified? _____
- 62. Is the facility licensed? _____
- 63. Is there a call system? _____
- 64. Is there a care plan? _____
- 65. Are there rehabilitation services? _____
- 66. Is there a salon and barbershop onsite? _____
- 67. Are there activities in the facility for residents? _____
- 68. What entertaining groups or programs visit the residents? _____
- 69. Is cable television available and at what cost? _____
- 70. Is Internet service available and at what cost? _____
- 71. How are resident telephone services handled? _____
- 72. Is the personal family physician involved with the resident's care? _____
- 73. What is the family visitation policy and hours? _____
- 74. Is hospice available if desired? _____
- 75. 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.

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.

Consider calling a *Housing Specialist* or *Referral & Caregiving Resource* for Assistance. These professionals are listed on SeniorsResourceGuide.com.

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](http://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.

www.aoa.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

National Association of State Units on Aging – NASUA

Association through which state agencies on aging promote social policy in the public and private sectors to meet the current and future needs of older persons, adults with disabilities, and their families and caregivers.

www.NASUA.org

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

Have Questions?

Visit www.SeniorsResourceGuide.com and our national and local Internet directories to find other resources for seniors. The website lists 76 topics in 6 categories.

In our National Directory we are building a list of all assisted living and skilled nursing facilities that are in at least 2 states. We are including website links in this resource. Check out these companies and review their websites.

Go to www.SeniorsResourceGuide.com/National

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

Websites: www.Seniors-E-Guide.com | www.SeniorsResourceGuide.com

Seniors-E-Guide.com.com

This e-publication is available at www.SeniorsE-Guide.com

List of e-Publications: *Selecting Assisted Living & Higher Levels of Care*
 Selecting Active Independent Living & Retirement Communities
 Selecting In-Home Care/Companions or Home Health Agency
 Care Options for Developmentally Disabled Seniors
 Resources for Low & Moderate Income Independent Seniors

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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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