

Choosing a Senior Community

Choosing the right senior community ensures that older adults receive the level of care, safety, and social engagement they need to thrive. It can significantly impact their emotional well-being, daily comfort, and access to healthcare services. A well-matched community also fosters independence while providing peace of mind for both residents and their families.

Key Questions to Consider

Level of Care and Services

- ✓ What levels of care do you provide, and what is included in each level of care?
- ✓ How is level of care determined?
- ✓ What personal care services are available (e.g., assistance with bathing, dressing, medication management)?
- ✓ What happens when my loved one needs more care?
- ✓ How often are residents' care needs evaluated?

Policies and Costs and Procedure:

- ✓ What types of contracts are signed to become a resident?
- ✓ Do we pay month to month, or can we pay in advance for future months?
- ✓ Are there added costs for couples? If so what are the costs for extra individuals?
- ✓ Are residents required to have renter's insurance?
- ✓ Does your facility accept and assistance from community based programs such as Medicaid or Veterans benefits?
- ✓ What are the monthly costs, and what do they include?
- ✓ Is there a community fee? Is it refundable or negotiable?
- ✓ Are there additional fees for services like housekeeping or transportation?
- ✓ Are we able to hire outside help if my loved one needs more around the clock care? If not, what does your facility do to accommodate those needs?
- ✓ What notice is needed if my loved one needs to move out of your facility?
- ✓ Is there a policy for reporting suspected abuse?

- ✓ Are hygiene products and incontinence supplies included in the price? If not, what is the cost?

Staffing:

- ✓ What is the staff-to-resident ratio?
- ✓ What qualifications and training do staff members have?
- ✓ Are there nurses on site 24/7?
- ✓ Is staff available to provide 24-hour assistance with activities of daily living?
- ✓ What is the staff turnover rate?

Health Care Needs

- ✓ Are there doctors that travel to your facility and see residents in their own environment?
- ✓ Does your facility have its own pharmacy?
- ✓ Are there social services or mental health counselors available for my loved one?
- ✓ Does your facility offer rehabilitation and skilled nursing care for post acute events?
- ✓ Does your facility contract with any outside agencies for changing care needs? (Hospice, Rehabilitation, Dementia care)
- ✓ Are there any requirements of residents on or nearing hospice? Does family need to supplement 24/7 care or can your facility provide this if needed?

Living Environment:

- ✓ What types of rooms or apartments are available?
- ✓ Are there private and shared rooms available?
- ✓ Are there furnished rooms available, or are we responsible for bringing our own furniture?
- ✓ Are pets allowed, and if so, are there any restrictions?
- ✓ How often are the rooms cleaned, and what housekeeping services are provided?
- ✓ Are there call bell systems for my loved one to seek urgent assistance?
- ✓ Are there any restrictions in the apartments/rooms? (Cameras, Electric cook tops)
- ✓ Are the rooms equipped with safety measures, like grab bars, shower chairs, and non skid walkways?

Community and Activities:

- ✓ What is the community culture like?
- ✓ What is the average age of the residents who reside here?

- ✓ What types of activities and social events are offered to residents?
- ✓ How does the facility promote resident engagement and well-being?
- ✓ Does your facility offer outings to the community?
- ✓ Where does your transportation take residents, are there restrictions?
- ✓ Are there any outdoor seating options available?
- ✓ Does your facility provide entertainment? If so, how often?

Dining and Nutrition:

- ✓ What meals are provided, and can residents request special dietary options?
- ✓ How many meals per day are provided at your facility?
- ✓ How are nutritional guidelines determined for meal preparation?
- ✓ Are there common areas that my loved one can cook in?
- ✓ Can we sample a dining experience at your facility before moving in?
- ✓ When visiting, are we able to eat with our loved ones in the communal dining setting? If so, are there extra costs or do you need to be notified ahead of time?
- ✓ Does your kitchen offer altered diets and textures (Puree, Ground, Soft, etc)

Safety and Security:

- ✓ What safety measures are in place for residents?
- ✓ How does the facility handle emergencies or medical situations?
- ✓ Are there cameras in common areas and outside the building?
- ✓ Are the doors locked at any certain time of day?
- ✓ Does your facility offer Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS)?
- ✓ How often are emergency drills completed?

Visiting Policies:

- ✓ What are the visiting hours for family and friends?
- ✓ Are there any restrictions on guests?
- ✓ Are pets allowed to visit?
- ✓ Are there rooms for visitors to rent and stay over night?

Additional Considerations

- ❖ ***Tour the facility:*** Pay attention to the atmosphere, cleanliness, and how staff interacts with residents. (Request a tour during meal times, or during activities!)
- ❖ ***Always ask about policies:*** Inquire about the policies regarding refunds, transfers, and discharge if a resident's care needs change significantly. (Request pamphlets, brochures or samples of the contracts the facility will have you sign)
- ❖ ***Know your location:*** Some facilities may be a distance from your loved ones' providers, and some facilities have limited transportation and access to outside specific mileage.
- ❖ ***Get to know the residents:*** Don't be shy! When touring ask residents how they like their experience, and make sure you understand what they are offered.