

SENIOR HOUSING

What You Need to Know



A resource designed to help families facing difficult decisions concerning housing and care for an elderly loved one

SNAP  **for Seniors** TM



When it comes to making decisions about care... knowledge is everything

This booklet will help you understand what to consider when assessing senior housing options and will direct you to a number of additional resources to aid you in your search.

Whether driven by an acute medical situation or simply a lifestyle choice, finding the right senior housing option for you or a loved one can be a challenge.

The first step toward success is evaluating your loved one's care needs and personal preferences so that you know what to look for in a housing provider.

Consulting your loved one's physician or a professional geriatric care manager is recommended.

In order to get a list of senior housing options in your desired area, you may contact your local Area Agency on Aging (n4a.org) and use the Senior Housing Locator. You can also log on to snapforseniors.com to get a free comprehensive list of all licensed senior housing providers, searchable by specific care and lifestyle criteria.

Once you have a short list of potential options, visit each facility at least once and use this booklet as a guide during your search.

In addition, you may download checklists from snapforseniors.com to assist you when touring senior housing communities. With these, you may better understand what questions to ask regarding licenses & certifications, services offered, amenities available, policies, costs, and more. It should be understood that these tools represent an ideal and that most communities will not meet all of these criteria.

Housing Options and Level of Care Provided

SKILLED NURSING FACILITY

24 hour licensed nursing staff. Provides highest level of care.

ASSISTED LIVING

For those who are no longer able to live safely alone. Many specialize in dementia care.

RESIDENTIAL CARE

Homelike setting typically in residential areas with live-in caregivers.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

Organized retirement community with no personal or medical care provided.

CONTINUING CARE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

Campus of living choices, from private homes to skilled nursing; providing a diverse selection of services.



License types and housing categories vary from state to state, so the level of care may differ.

Assessing Your Needs

It's important to carefully assess all your needs when choosing housing.

Location: It's best to find senior housing that is convenient for relatives and friends to visit. The more you visit your loved one, the more peace of mind you have that they are happy and well cared for. If your loved one lives in a different

state, try to choose a location that is familiar to them and easily accessible to local friends and family members.

Care & Personal Services: Facilities with care services typically require a healthcare professional's evaluation before a resident is accepted. A care plan may be developed by a nurse or social worker in coordination with your loved one's family and doctor. (Note: Make sure that this plan is updated on a regular basis to ensure that the proper care is being given as a senior's needs change.) Make sure that the facility you choose is adequately equipped to handle all specific conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, tendency to fall, diabetes, etc., and that you understand what conditions could cause a resident to be discharged.



Caregiver Considerations: The quality of the caregivers employed by the community is of utmost importance. A good caregiver is knowledgeable, professional, respectful and friendly. Be sure to ask about the ratios between the number and types of caregiving staff (registered nurses, certified nursing assistants, etc.) and residents. In addition, a low level of staff turnover is preferred so that residents have a chance to become familiar and comfortable with them, and so that staff may get to know residents well enough to recognize when changes occur. Be sure to find out what sort of training staff members are required to complete. Visit during all shifts of care and ask to speak with some of the caregivers, not just the individual giving you a tour.

Cost & Payment Terms: What resources do you have to pay for senior housing? Make sure the facility accepts the payment form you're planning to use. You may want to speak with a financial planner or elder law attorney to help you understand and organize your options.

If private funds are not available, you can determine if your loved one might be eligible for any government



snapforseniors.com

A free senior housing information source that lists all licensed senior housing, provides helpful tools to assist you with assessing your needs, and matches your needs with available options.

subsidies by contacting your local Area Agency on Aging. If paying with private funds, ask what happens when the money runs out and the resident is eligible for Medicaid, if applicable. Is the resident eligible for the Veteran's Administration Aid & Attendance Benefits program? Is long-term care insurance applicable? Also, make sure to obtain an itemized list of what is included in quoted prices and what services result in additional fees.

Meals: Try to visit a facility during mealtime. Are the residents provided

a suitable area for eating? How does the food smell? Is the food healthy? Are healthy snacks available at all times? Are utensils and serving dishes senior-friendly and clean? Is mealtime a pleasant experience? Are those who need help with eating cared for with dignity and respect? If you live nearby and want to bring food in, is this allowed? Can family dine with the resident for special occasions with advance notice? If so, at what additional charge? It is also necessary to consider preferences (e.g., ethnic or kosher meals) and health considerations (e.g., low sodium or low sugar diets). Ask to have a meal in the facility.



Amenities: Think about the things that would make the potential resident feel “at home” such as telephone access, TV in the room, Internet access, courtyard or outside area, space to garden, windows that open,



temperature control in rooms, pet therapy, senior-friendly part of town, housekeeping, hair salon, massage, privacy and any other desired amenities that will result in a higher quality of life. Does the community offer personal response services for residents? Is local transportation to the store or medical services provided by the community? Is there adequate parking?

Activities: Find out what activities are available for residents. Does the facility organize activities in the community, such as shopping, movies, or visiting a local park? Is there an exercise room? Are there planned exercise times to keep residents moving and active regardless of their level of mobility? Are computers available with Internet access for all residents and guests to use? Can family members dine with the resident for a cost?

Other Housing Factors

There are some things that are absolutely required when choosing senior housing.

License and Certification: Is the facility licensed and/or certified to provide the care you or your loved one requires? Are all licenses and certifications up-to-date? Ask to see their license records. Also, can the facility confirm that staff members are licensed and/or certified to perform these services?

Personal Possessions: Check the agreement carefully regarding personal possessions. What happens if the resident has a prolonged hospital stay? What possessions is the resident allowed to bring? Are personal possessions covered by insurance against theft or damage?

Privacy: Make sure the facility will allow for the level of privacy desired by the resident. Are doors closed when residents are changed or bathed? Is there a space where visitors can see the resident in private?

Quality Evaluation: Ask the facility to see their most recent state inspection survey (they must comply upon request) and ask for references from

other residents' family members. Ask what type of background screening is performed for all staff and how often they are updated? In addition, your local long-term care ombudsman's office can provide information about facility performance, and can be located through Itcombudsman.org. Also, snapforseniors.com provides links to the *Nursing Home Compare* reports for every Medicare-certified facility. Finally, find out if the community is accredited by any one of a handful of respected accreditation bodies, such as The Joint Commission (jointcommission.org) and CARF International (carf.org). These accreditation programs provide assurance to senior housing seekers that the community meets accepted standards and is focused on high-quality service.





Community Characteristics: It is important that residents feel welcome and comfortable in their new home. Do residents seem comfortable and engaged? Do all staff members wear name tags? Are residents treated with respect and dignity? Is the temperature kept at a comfortable level? Is the facility clean and relatively free of odor? Are hallways well lit and clear of clutter? Does the staff speak the resident's language? Does the community adopt a person-centered culture?

Security Issues: Are staff members' backgrounds checked? Are all entrances and windows secured? Is there an emergency evacuation plan? Are there smoke alarms and a sprinkler system?

Summary

- 1. Determine** needs and preferences.
- 2. Log on** to snapforseniors.com to search for housing options in your desired area and use the advanced search tools to create a short list of facilities which best meet your criteria. Download checklists for tours and other helpful tools.
- 3. Visit** each facility at least once, using this booklet as a guide to determine what issues to consider and questions to ask.
- 4. Look into** the past performance of the facilities using the resources listed in the quality evaluations section.
- 5.** When making a decision, **compare** the pros and cons of each facility, and include your loved one as much as possible.
- 6.** Once your loved one moves into a new home, **visit regularly** to ensure it is a successful match.

Professional Resources

The following is a list of some professional groups that can help ease the transition to senior housing.

The Alzheimer's Association

(alz.org): The leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's disease care, support and research.

Case Management Society of

America (cmsa.org): The leading non-profit association dedicated to the support and development of case management.

The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center (ltcombudsman.org)

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a.org)

(n4a.org): AAAs were established to respond to the needs of Americans 60 and older in every local community.

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (naela.org)

(naela.org): An association of attorneys in the public and private sector who deal with legal issues affecting seniors.

National Association of Senior Move Managers (nasmm.org)

(nasmm.org): A group of professionals who specialize in facilitating a smooth transition for seniors moving from the home into a senior housing community.

Seniors Real Estate Specialists (seniorsrealestate.com):

A designation offered by the National Association of Realtors to agents who specialize in senior real estate services.

The Society of Certified Senior Advisors (csa.us): A multi-discipline group of professionals who have earned the Certified Senior Advisor designation through specialized education.



**Simplify *your* search
for senior housing at:
[snapforseniors.com](https://www.snapforseniors.com)**

*Access to comprehensive
and objective listings.*

*Many listings include photos
and show availability.*

*Advanced search criteria available
to screen your search results.*

SNAPforSeniors® - the leading information and technology company that specializes in the collection and publishing of high-quality current data on senior housing, professionals and organizations nationwide that serve older Americans, caregivers and their families.



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