



Senior Living Communities:
What families need to know

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Is it time to consider senior living?



Do you have an older family member who is starting to need more help than you can provide? Would it be a relief to you, and to that person, if he or she had fewer daily responsibilities? Would it make you feel better to know your older family member was under the watchful eye of a professional staff?

Then a move to senior living may be the answer.

This guide will give you a better sense of what a transition from “home to community” is like, as well as how to choose the right community for you and your family. Best of luck with your search.



Does this describe your older family member?

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Struggles with yard work and house cleaning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Struggles with home repairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Driving skills are diminished |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Struggles with cooking/forgets to turn off burners |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Forgets appointments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Forgets recommendations from doctors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Forgets to take medication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Often seems bored or anxious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Forgets to pay bills |

If you answered yes to five or more of these questions, then a move to a senior living community may be a good choice for your family member.

Is senior living affordable?

Use the worksheet below to accurately compare the current cost of living for your family member with the cost of living in a senior community.

CURRENT MONTHLY EXPENSES	CURRENT HOME	SENIOR LIVING
Mortgage or Rental Payment	\$	\$
Property Tax and Insurance	\$	<i>included</i>
Utilities <i>electricity, gas, water, sewer, trash removal</i>	\$	<i>included*</i>
Homeowner's or Renter's Insurance	\$	\$
Yard Care and Landscape Maintenance	\$	<i>included</i>
Maintenance and Home Repairs	\$	<i>included</i>
24-hour Emergency Call Service	\$	<i>included</i>
Transportation <i>insurance, gas, registration, repairs</i>	\$	<i>included</i>
Daily Meals and Refreshments Available 24 Hours a Day	\$	<i>included</i>
Entertainment and Leisure Activities <i>social, cultural, recreational events</i>	\$	<i>included</i>
Health Monitoring Program	\$	<i>included</i>
Exercise Programs	\$	<i>included</i>
Full-time Activities Staff	\$	<i>included</i>
Weekly Housekeeping and Linen Services	\$	<i>included</i>
TOTAL	\$	\$

If the cost comparison worksheet shows that a senior living community may cost less, then you owe it to your family member and yourself to investigate further.

*For most communities. Please speak with the Executive Director for details.

Cost versus value

If the worksheet shows that a senior living community may cost more, consider its *value*. A move to senior living could very well extend your family member's life – not to mention, improve your relationship with him or her (once you're no longer the caregiver, time spent together can be quality time).

Is the quality of life and peace of mind that senior living can offer worth a little more money?

The cost of waiting

Consider the issues your older family member may face if he or she continues to live at home.

	SENIOR LIVING	WITHOUT SENIOR LIVING
SOCIAL INTERACTION	Offers daily activities to encourage social interaction with people who share similar interests.	Older people who live alone or with busy family members may feel isolated.
TRANSPORTATION	Arranges transportation for social activities, errands and doctors' appointments.	Arranging transportation to necessary appointments may be challenging.
NUTRITION	Employs a full culinary staff to ensure delicious, restaurant-style meals with a variety of options.	Older people may rely on easily prepared meals rather than healthier alternatives.
HOUSEKEEPING	Offers housekeeping services, including linen and laundry services as requested.	Maintaining a home may become a greater burden.
EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE	Usually provides 24-hour assistance with an emergency call system located in each apartment.	Immediate help is often not available to older people who live alone.
EXERCISE	Offers exercise programs that maximize mobility, strength and overall health.	Older people may not have access to adequate exercise equipment and programs.
MEDICATION <i>(applies only to assisted living or supportive living residents with medication assistance services)</i>	Provides assistance with medications, making sure residents take what they're supposed to, and when.*	Without assistance, older people may take medications incorrectly.
MAINTAINING INDEPENDENCE	Offers assistance as needed and encourages residents to remain as independent as possible.	Older people may become totally dependent on their families.

*Service provided where allowed by state regulations.



Talking to Mom and Dad

Don't let the fear of offending an older family member stop you from addressing the topic of senior living. It's essential that you know a family member's wants and needs *before* there is a crisis situation.

Consider the following tips before starting a discussion with your family member:

- Be prepared. The more you know about senior living communities, the easier it will be to answer questions and overcome obstacles.
- Choose a time to talk when your family member is rested and feeling well.
- Listen and respond to his or her concerns. You can help your family member express concerns by asking leading questions; i.e., “Are you worried that a community won't be as nice as your home?”
- Everyone has a role. It's essential that all parties feel they are contributing to the discussion. Allow all family members to have their say.



How to choose a senior living community

All senior living communities are not the same. We recommend you use the criteria below to help you and your family member choose the right community.

First Impressions

- Does the community seem clean, comfortable and welcoming?
- Were you greeted immediately upon arrival by a staff member?
- Are residents greeted by name from staff members?
- Does the community have a current license, if required by state law?
- Is the front lobby and entrance area clean and well-maintained?
- Is parking available for guests and visitors?

Apartments and Accommodations

- Is there more than one apartment size and floor plan?
- Do apartments have their own doors that lock?
- Is there an emergency response system in each apartment?
- Is adequate storage and closet space available?
- May residents keep pets? If so, who is responsible for their care?
- Do apartments come equipped with a kitchen or kitchenette?

Amenities and Comforts

- Is there an on-site beauty or barber shop?
- Is free transportation provided by the community, or is public transportation easily accessible?
- Are there attractive and comfortable common areas?
- Are residents' apartments regularly cleaned and maintained?
- Are laundry services available? If so, is there a charge?
- Are there outdoor areas available for socializing and for gatherings?

How to choose a senior living community (continued)

Activities and Social Outlets

- How many activities are offered each day? Does a trained staff member coordinate the activities?
- Is there a posted schedule of events? Are events in progress when you visit?
- Are there organized activities during the evenings and on weekends?
- Are religious services offered on the premises? Is transportation available?
- Are regularly scheduled exercise programs available?
- Is there a resident council, family council and/or family support group?

Food and Dining

- Are nutritious, freshly prepared meals offered each day?
- Are meals served restaurant-style in a comfortable, clean dining room?
- Is there assigned seating at meals?
- Is consideration given for special diets?
- Are snacks, refreshments and drinks available to residents at all times?
- Are there menu options for each meal? How often does the menu change?

Safety and Security

- Are smoke detectors and sprinkler systems in place for apartments and common areas?
- Is there an emergency response system available in each apartment?
- What type of night security system is in place? Are outside doors locked? If so, at what time?
- On average, how long does it take for a staff member to respond to a resident's request for help?
- Are there clear procedures in place in the event of a medical emergency?

Staff and Leadership

- Are the staff members friendly and helpful?
- Were you introduced to the executive director or another member of management when you visited?
- What is the mission statement of the community and/or its parent company?
- Is adequate staffing present at night and on weekends?
- What is the resident-to-staff ratio on a typical day?

Friends and Neighbors

- Is this an environment that promotes a positive and fulfilling lifestyle?
- Do residents appear happy and busy?
- Do staff and residents interact in a friendly and warm manner?
- Is the location convenient for family and friends to visit?
- What do current residents or family members at the community say about the experience of living there?

Medical and Personal Care

- What health services are available on-site?
- May new residents keep their current physicians?
- What type of medication support is provided?
- Is there assistance for activities of daily living, such as bathing and dressing?
- Are additional services, such as hospice, home health or physical therapy, provided or allowed?

Contracts and Leases

- Are there different costs for various levels of care?
- When may a contract be terminated? What are the transfer, discharge and refund policies?
- How often are fees increased?

Moving out. And moving in.

Careful planning can make the move out of a home and into an apartment relatively worry-free. “Paring down” belongings is an important first step.

The process of paring down can be a challenge. There are memories tied up in every possession your family member owns. Don’t be surprised if both you and your family member become emotional during the process. Just remember, it has to be done – so let’s do it right.

Use the list below to help your family member determine what personal belongings they need to bring with them to their new home.

Furniture:

- Single or full bed
- Chairs with arms
- Nightstand
- Lamps and lights
- Small table
- Television and stand
- Small refrigerator on stand (if desired)
- Small microwave on stand (if desired)

Linens:

- Comforter
- Mattress pad (flame retardant)
- Blanket
- Pillow
- Extra towels (if desired)
- Sheets (if not using sheets provided by the community)

Bathroom:

- Extendable shower hose (handheld, adjustable)
- Shower caddy
- Non-skid strips for shower floor
- Shower chair with back and adjustable legs (if needed)

Personal Items:

- Personal hygiene items: shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, mouthwash, deodorant, lotions, tissues, shaving items, etc.
- Slippers, slip-on shoes
- Washable cardigan sweaters
- Robe and slippers
- Clothing and undergarments
- Outerwear

Miscellaneous:

- Clothes hamper or basket
- Wastebasket – must be metal or flame retardant
- Night-lights
- Clock with large numbers
- Calendar with large numbers
- Telephone (large numbers and audio assist device, if needed)
- Family pictures
- Paintings/pictures to hang
- Stationery and stamped envelopes
- Favorite snacks
- Extra blanket

Conquering clutter

Here are some suggestions for easy and effective downsizing.

- **Copy**

It's the memories that matter, not the object. So make a copy. For instance, a single DVD of photographs will take up much less space than a big box of photos.

- **Donate**

Instead of selling unwanted items, consider donating them to a favorite charity. This comes with the added bonus of a tax deduction. Also, consider calling other family and friends to see if they would like something special from the collection.

- **Focus**

Begin early and give everyone plenty of time. Take on one room at a time and stay with it until it's cleared. Otherwise, it's easy to become distracted and begin to shuffle items from one room to another.

- **Purge**

Will those old bank statements really be missed? Keep only the belongings and personal possessions that are essential. If it hasn't been looked at or used in the past 12 to 24 months, chances are it won't be needed.

Help with downsizing

One trusted resource is the National Association of Senior Move Managers. NASMM can be a valuable resource for older people in transition. This non-profit organization will provide a complete list of professional move managers in your area who can help with things such as downsizing tips, packing and moving arrangements.

The senior living community you've chosen should also be able to recommend a move manager. Be sure to check references and fees before hiring an individual or company. Also, make sure the company is insured and bonded.

What's the process for moving in?

Below, you'll find some tips to help make your family member's move a success.

1. Choose an apartment. Ask for room dimensions and a floor plan to get an accurate gauge of what will fit.
2. Expect paperwork. It's required and will help establish new residency, as well as help determine any additional personal preferences.
3. Deposit. If there is a deposit required, find out if it is refundable prior to move-in. A deposit will reserve the apartment and provide first right of refusal up until the move-in date.
4. Pick the date. Scheduling a date for move-in allows the community to be ready, and you and your family member to prepare for the move.
5. Confirmation. It's a good idea to call the community two to three days prior to the scheduled move-in with any last-minute questions. It's also a helpful reminder for the community staff that a new resident will be arriving soon.
6. Time to go. Now your family member is ready to enjoy their new home!

Here's to the good life

"I never knew how lonely and isolated I was 'til I moved out of my home."

You'd be surprised how many new residents of a senior living community say this.

Community living will give your older family member an instant social life. He or she will find opportunities every day to participate in activities and interact with others.

And, perhaps more importantly, your family member will enjoy the freedom to do the things he or she really wants to do. No more housekeeping, yard work or cooking big meals. No more driving – all transportation needs will be provided. This is a chance to have "quality time" all the time. Your family member isn't giving up independence, but gaining freedom.

Being part of a senior living community offers something to you as well. You get the peace of mind that comes with knowing your family member is safe and well-cared for.

We hope this guide has been of help to you. Please let us know if there is any other way we can serve you.

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