

Checklist for Choosing a Retirement Home

While you are evaluating your retirement home options, keep in mind the following important points, and check them off when they meet that particular standard.

Atmosphere

- As you arrive at the residence, do you like its location and outward appearance?
- As you enter the lobby and tour the residence, is the decor attractive and homelike?
- Did you receive a warm greeting from the staff welcoming you to the residence?
- Do staff call residents by name and interact warmly with them?
- Do residents socialize with each other and appear happy and comfortable?
- Are staff appropriately dressed, personable and professional?
- Are the staff members you pass during your tour friendly to you?
- Are visits with the resident welcome at any time?

Physical Features

- Is the community well designed for residents' needs? Are there plenty of common areas and features of interest?
- Does the residence have good natural and artificial lighting?
- Are there appropriate fire safety features and procedures in place? What about security?
- Is the residence clean, free of odors, and appropriately heated/cooled?
- Are hand-rails available to aid in walking and are floors of a non-skid material?
- Are carpets firm to ease walking?
- Is parking available for residents who own cars?
- Does this residence have an emergency power generator?

Services

- Can the residence provide a list of services available? Do they offer what you are looking for? Are there extra fees or are the services included?
- Is staff able to provide 24-hour assistance with the activities of daily living if needed? (dressing, eating, mobility, hygiene and grooming, bathing, toileting, and laundry)
- Are there procedures to communicate and interact with family members?
- Does the residence provide housekeeping services in residents' units?
- Are laundry services provided? Can residents do their own personal laundry if they wish?
- Are barber or beautician services offered on-site?
- What provisions are there to attend to spiritual needs and interests?

Medication & Health Care

- Does the residence have specific policies regarding medication administration?
- Are there registered nursing staff on-site around the clock?
- How close is the nearest hospital, medical clinic, or dentist office?
- Are doctor's clinics available on-site?
- Are pharmacy services offered on-site?
- Does staff coordinate home care visits from physical therapists, occupational therapists, etc.?

- Are services available to assist residents who experience memory or orientation losses?
- Does the residence have a clearly stated procedure for responding to a medical emergency?

Needs Assessments, Contracts, & Finances

- When may a contract be terminated and what are the refund policies?
- Are additional services available if the resident's needs change? What are the fees?
- Is there a procedure to pay for additional services if they are needed on a temporary basis?
- Do billing and payment policies seem fair and reasonable?

Individual Unit Features

- Are different sizes and types of suites available?
- Do residents have their own lockable doors?
- Is a 24-hour emergency response system accessible in each room?
- Are bathrooms private, with handicapped accommodations for wheelchairs and walkers?
- Is heating individually controlled in the suite? Is there air-conditioning?
- Are residents able to bring their own furnishings and what may they bring?
- Do all suites have a telephone and cable TV, and how is billing handled?
- Is a kitchen area provided with a refrigerator, sink and cooking appliance?
- Are there accommodations to facilitate family visits?

Social & Recreational Activities

- Is there evidence of an organized activities program, such as a posted daily schedule, events in progress, reading materials, visitors, etc.?
- Do residents participate in activities outside of the residence in the neighboring community?
- Do volunteers come into the residence to help with or conduct programs?
- Are family members welcome to participate in activities and events?
- How are resident needs and desires for privacy accommodated in the recreational program?
- Are residents' pets allowed in the residence? Who is responsible for their care?

Food Service

- Does the residence provide three nutritionally balanced meals a day?
- Is the menu varied and interesting? May a resident request special foods?
- Are snacks available?
- Are the dining facilities pleasant, clean, and well maintained?
- Are private dining areas available?
- How are special nutritional needs accommodated?
- May residents eat meals in their suites? Is tray service available?
- Are Food Services staff pleasant and well trained? How is the service?
- How are meals scheduled? Is there flexibility?
- Are family meals and guests easily accommodated? What are the charges?