



A SPECIAL REPORT SENIOR HOUSING

ASSISTED SENIOR HOUSING

Answering 12 Most Frequently Asked Questions



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Seniors Real Estate Specialists (SRES®) are licensed salespeople or brokers, members in good standing of the National Association of REALTORS®, who have taken the additional hours of training needed to help senior clients make wise decisions when buying, selling or investing in real estate. Many seniors have not invested or sold in years and their issues, requirements, and needs are special in order to protect and enhance their equity.

SRES designees belong to the Senior Advantage Real Estate Council (SAREC®) which offers the SRES designation nationally to those REALTORS® who have demonstrated the requisite knowledge, experience, insight and expertise to be a Seniors Specialist. The Council also offers its members frequent updates on senior housing issues.

The REALTOR® who delivered this *Special Report* to you is a member of the Senior Advantage Real Estate Council, having earned the prestigious and nationally recognized designation - Seniors Real Estate Specialist (SRES). For more information about this program, call your REALTOR® or email them from the council's web site at www.seniorsrealestate.com.

The 12 Most Frequently Asked Questions ABOUT SENIOR HOUSING

1. Why should I be interested in Senior Housing?



At some point in our lives, most of us will face the decision of moving into some type of senior-specific housing. Examples of senior-specific housing include retirement communities, continuing care retirement communities, and assisted living facilities. This decision is not an easy one, and it is made more complex by the wide variety of options that are available.

Seniors who have lived in the same home for decades have no framework for moving or living anywhere else. Some seniors are forced to move because of concerns about the security, safety, or accessibility of their longtime home. Others decide to move because their current residence doesn't offer the social and recreational amenities they want to enjoy during their retirement years.

This report answers some basic questions about senior housing and provides seniors guidance in making this important decision.

2. What is a “Retirement Community”?



Retirement communities provide housing for people **who are able to live independently**. These communities offer a broad array of recreational activities and services, including transportation to shopping and medical facilities, delivery of meals, and organized socializing programs.

3. What is an “Assisted Living Facility”?



Assisted living facilities provide housing for people **who need help with the basic activities** of daily living, which may include bathing, dressing, walking, and

so on. Services may also involve monitoring a resident's medications and summoning help in the event of a medical emergency.

4. What is a "Continuing Care Retirement Community"?



A continuing care retirement community (CCRC) **offers various levels of housing and care services in the same environment.** These communities are appropriate for people who wish to avoid moving from a retirement community to an assisted living facility when they need additional care, for example. A CCRC is also a good option for married couples when one spouse is independent and the other requires a higher level of routine medical care.

5. What is a "Skilled Nursing Facility"?



A skilled nursing facility is not considered to be "senior housing" in the general sense. Rather, these facilities are for people **who require 24-hour skilled medical attention.**

6. What are some of the criteria I should consider in selecting a Senior Community or Facility?



The following criteria are important to consider when choosing a facility:

- ◆ The reputation of the management,
- ◆ The financial integrity of the institution,
- ◆ The entrance requirements and conditions in when the entrance fee would be refundable,
- ◆ The method by which the monthly fees are established,
- ◆ The services included in the monthly fees,
- ◆ The frequency with which fees have been increased,
- ◆ The consequences if your financial resources become depleted,
- ◆ The health and personal care services that are available,
- ◆ The availability of, and proximity to, a health-care facility,
- ◆ The limitations on health services and medical care,

- ◆ The conditions that determine whether you may be moved within the facility,
- ◆ The policies for moving you to a different level of care,
- ◆ The length of time that your place in the facility would be held during your absence if you were hospitalized,
- ◆ The number and types of meals included in the monthly fees,
- ◆ The policies for permitting pets in the facility,
- ◆ The policies for permitting visitors and overnight guests,
- ◆ The security arrangements,
- ◆ The immediate move-in schedule, and
- ◆ Any other criteria that may be applicable to your personal situation.

7. What are some common misunderstandings about Senior Care Facilities?



People shopping for senior housing should be aware of some disconnects between perception and reality. First, appearances can be deceiving. An attractive home-like environment doesn't necessarily mean the best quality care will be provided. Second, you don't always get what you pay for. A more expensive facility or one with non-profit status won't necessarily translate into the best care available. Third, licensure and accreditation are important, but are not always good indicators of the best facility for a particular person's needs. It is important to look beyond the basics and the superficialities and, instead, truly scrutinize the facility for important details that reflect the **quality of care** and the **quality of life** provided.

8. If a nursing home is licensed by the state and accredited by the Federal Government, does that mean it provides an acceptable level of care?



Accreditation and a state license (in states that have such licensing) are essential requirements. However, neither necessarily means the facility provides the *best care available* for your needs or your loved one's needs. Facilities with the same credentials can have vastly different rankings in terms of the quality of care and the quality of life provided.

9. Is it okay to select a care facility from a directory or obtain a referral from a placement agency?



Maybe. Directories and referrals can be a starting point for your search for an appropriate care facility; however, it's important to realize that directory listings are paid advertisements and placement agencies usually receive a referral fee from the facility for each person who becomes a resident. An on-site visit and thorough evaluation is definitely in order.

10. A hospital social worker gave me a list of nursing homes in the area and told me the hospital staff has visited these facilities. Is that an adequate evaluation?



A list of local facilities is certainly helpful as a starting point in your search for an appropriate care facility. However, a personal visit and in-depth review are necessary before making a decision. The hospital staff may have visited the facilities some time ago or only briefly, and the quality of care or the extent of the services may have changed since then. Also, these visits were not made with your specific needs or your loved one's needs in mind.

11. What services can an eldercare consultant provide?



An eldercare consultant works with seniors, their families, and service providers to evaluate and select appropriate senior housing facilities for individuals in need of such services.

Specific assistance might include:

- ◆ A comprehensive assessment of an individual's health and competence,
- ◆ Coordination with hospital and medical staff to provide support for a patient returning home,
- ◆ Assistance in identifying the most appropriate level of care for an individual,
- ◆ Coordination of in-home services and supervision of in-home assistants or medical workers, and
- ◆ Referral services.

Some consultants also provide assistance with money management, bill paying and record keeping for Medicare, and insurance payments to health-care providers.

12. What else can I do to ensure I will make the best decision?



Making a decision about senior housing isn't easy, but there are some things you can do to help ensure you will make the right choice. First, *plan ahead*. Start thinking about your housing options before you face any pressure to move. You don't need to make a commitment ahead of time, but you can educate yourself about your choices so you'll be able to make an informed decision when the time comes. Second, *talk about your options and needs*. Get a second opinion and a third opinion. Talk with your family. Consult your trusted advisers, perhaps a real estate broker, an attorney, an accountant, or an estate planning expert. Third, *adopt a positive outlook*. Moving can be a difficult and emotional experience, yet it also can be an exciting transition to a new lifestyle. List the positive reasons for your move and make the most of this time of your life.