

Checklist for evaluating a senior living community

Choosing a continuing care senior living community that's right for you involves many factors. You'll be looking for a place that "feels right" — but don't depend on feelings alone...

This checklist includes the important factors to consider when comparing communities; it is a resource to help you look at facilities' strengths and weaknesses. Consider visiting two to three communities, and use the same checklist to evaluate and make notes on each.

1. Print a copy of this list for each community you are considering
2. Fill it out during each visit
3. Compare your notes; discuss them with your family

Note: As you move toward a decision, visit again at different times of day to get an even better feel for the staff and care.

Location and convenience

Is the community convenient to:

- Family _____
- Friends _____
- Church _____
- Doctors _____
- Bank _____
- Shopping _____

Is a continuum of care offered so that you can age in place?

- Independent living – a self-reliant lifestyle including doing your own cooking
Number of units: _____
- Assisted living – meals included plus add-on services available to maintain maximum independence
Number of units: _____
- Skilled nursing – provides 24-hr. professional nursing care
Number of units: _____

Is it affordable?

- Straight rental – price range _____
- Condo Ownership – price range _____
- Entrance fee – price range _____
- Pay for services – price range _____
- Are Medicare and Medicaid accepted? _____
- What happens to resident whose money runs out? _____

Quality of care indicators

The quality of the people you live with and who care for you is often more important than the physical surroundings. Ask about the organization's:

- Religious affiliation _____
- Staff-to-resident ratio _____
- Average length of service of staff _____
- Reason for existing (profit or non-profit) _____
- Overall atmosphere _____
- Policy about on-going training for staff _____
- Policy on privacy and respect for residents _____
- Results on its last two state inspections _____

The senior living community

Is the building safe and secure? Will it feel like home? Here are some factors to look for:

Safety

- Fire retardant brick or concrete construction
- Windows in rooms/apts. that open easily
- Wheelchair accessible porches/outdoor areas/gardens
- Well-lit entrance that's accessible in all types of weather
- Fire alarms and smoke detectors throughout the building(s)
- Parking for residents

Interior features.....

The facility should be bright, clean and sweet smelling. Here are some things to look for:

How recently has the building been remodeled? _____

Lobby:

- A homey feel _____
- Attractive décor _____
- Comfortable furniture _____
- Good Lighting _____
- Artwork _____
- TV/video equipment _____
- Fireplace _____

Dining areas:

- A homey feel _____
- Attractive décor _____
- Comfortable furniture _____
- Good Lighting _____
- Artwork _____
- Room for wheelchairs and walkers _____
 - Are they allowed in dining areas? _____

Hallways:

- Plenty of space for people and wheelchairs to pass _____
- Good Lighting _____
- Handrails _____
- Color coding making it easy finding your way around _____
- Practical flooring for wheelchairs, walkers, etc. _____

Residential rooms...

Emergency call system in the:

- Bedroom
- Bath
- Living area
- Smoke detectors
- Door locks

Furnishings...

- Bright and clean
- Freshly painted
- Private
- Quite
- Clean carpet / flooring
- Workable, insulated windows
- New view
- Drapes / blinds
- Individual control for air conditioning / heating
- Large bathroom with grab bars
- Convenient telephone jacks
- Cable TV hook up
- Ample storage

Does the space accommodate wheelchairs/walkers?

Will you be able to decorate with your own things?



Easy access to:

- Elevators
- Dining areas
- Laundry

Services

Are these services available?

- Housekeeping: How often for what fee? _____
- Personal laundry: How often for what fee? _____
- Linen services: How often for what fee? _____
- Transportation: How does it work? _____

Food service

Ask for sample menus. If possible, eat a meal there before making your final decision

- Meals well-balanced and appetizing _____
- Choices for entrees and amounts of food _____
- Meals served hot _____
- Special diets and dietary requests accommodated _____
- Menus supervised by registered dietician _____

What are the hours of operation?

- Snacks available? _____
- Guest and family members welcome? _____

What does the food plan include?



How are meals served?

- Buffet style _____
- Served by wait staff _____
- Open seating or assigned places _____
- Tray service in rooms available _____
- Second helpings or smaller portions available _____
- Wheelchairs and walkers allowed in the dining room _____

Social activities

Here are some activities that may be offered. Check what's available and how it compares with your interests.

- Exercise or wellness program _____
- Billiards _____
- Church services _____
- Bible study groups _____
- In-house library _____
- Access to public library _____
- Overnight guest rooms available _____
- Arts and crafts room _____
- Garden _____
- Computers _____
- Movies _____
- On-site speakers on current events _____
- Free on-site health screenings _____
- Music programs _____
- Month parties/special events _____
- Birthday parties for residents _____
- On-site educational classes _____
- Resident council governing body _____
- Intergenerational opportunities _____

The quality of a program can often be judged by the number of people assigned to it.

How many volunteers are involved with the facility?

How many staff members are there in the activity department?

On-site conveniences

- Chaplain
- Hair salon
- Laundry rooms
- Gift shop
- Postal center
- City bus service
- Convenient parking for residents and visitors

Special services

- Hospice care when needed
- Help with dressing
- Inoculations for flu, etc.
- Pet therapy
- Physical and occupation therapy available
- Staff Aid to help recovering residents back to apartment with services

Other factors

What details are important to you? Record your thoughts here:

Again, it is wise to visit two to three senior living communities and use the same checklist to evaluate and make notes on each. As you move toward a decision, visit again at different times of day to get an even better feel for the staff and care.

Calvin Community welcomes your interest, and we hope you'll choose to come live with us. If we aren't your choice, however, please know we wish you peace and happiness in your new home wherever you choose to live.

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