

## What to look for in a senior living community

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A senior living community can be the best next step for older adults – they come with no maintenance, a built-in community, and assistance with regular household tasks – making it true stress-free living. However, with so many options, how do families find the community that is the best fit?

There is a lot to consider when choosing a community from location to amenities to culture. Let's talk about what to look for and consider when selecting a senior living community.

1. Location
  - a. Determine the desired location and create a radius to focus the search on. A community's location can't be changed, so it's important to determine where to be before looking at communities to make the search easier. Nothing would be worse than falling in love with a community and then realizing it's not in a feasible location.
2. Size
  - a. Every community has a different number of residents they can have at one time. A small community will certainly have a different environment, culture, and atmosphere than a larger one. This is similar to choosing between a small town or a big city based on personal preference.
3. Cost
  - a. As with anything, it's essential to consider what one can afford. Take into account personal finances, any assistance they may be eligible for, and other assets they may be able to liquidate (i.e. a home sale). Use those to create a budget to help filter out communities. Tip: sometimes the community can help point out different resources and assistance options available. Think about bringing this up at a community visit!
4. Associate Ratio & Accreditations
  - a. It's important to consider the associate ratio, their accreditations, and what the community may have. Will there be enough associates for residents to receive high quality, individual care? Will the resident feel comfortable with the number of different team members who will be memorizing their care plan and providing the care? Are the teams members and community certified to provide the necessary services they may need – like memory care or physical therapy? Don't hesitate to inquire about the specifics when visiting and meeting with the team at communities.
5. Services Offered

- a. Create a list of what services are a need, a potential need, or a desire for care at a community. Every community may offer different services that they offer, and it's crucial to ensure all residents' needs (and wants!) will be met!
6. Transition Potential
  - a. Once a resident moves into a senior living community, they should have peace of mind that if they need to add more services to their care plan or transition to a different care suite, they can do so without having to start the senior living community search all over again. When searching for the perfect fit, think about it as a long-term care plan.
7. Activities & Events
  - a. One of the benefits of a senior living community is the organized programs and events, which can lower their risk of developing dementia by 26%. Take the time to ask each community about what their programs and events look like and the frequency. It may also help to consider what the resident would like to see in terms of events and activities from their community. Do they want more creative activities or physical activities? Are they more of a social activity person or a quiet activity one? Do they like to take weekly field trip or rather stay around the community? There are no correct answers, but these answers can all lead to finding the best fit!
8. Amenities
  - a. Create a list of what the resident would like to see in a community – workout rooms, activity centers, outdoor spaces, walking paths...whatever their heart desires. Create a wish list of amenities and use that to help narrow down the senior living options. Tip: Look at amenities in some different communities. This may help curate the perfect amenity wish list.
9. Culture
  - a. Every culture is different. When on a visit, get a feel for the team and the overall atmosphere of the community. Could the resident see themselves getting along and bonding with the team? Does the culture feel like a place where they would fit in and thrive? Don't be afraid to ask questions and use the visit to picture their life there.

As with many big decisions, there is much to consider in a senior living community. To help make this decision, consider which categories to prioritize and what the non-negotiables are. Talking with family members may also be helpful as this is decision will affect the whole family.

Have specific questions about senior living communities? Our team is ready to help!