

Questions to Ask When Choosing a Retirement Community

Many people have no idea of where to start when looking for a retirement community for themselves or a loved one. Some communities only offer independent living while other offer a continuum of care services to meet the changing healthcare needs of the individual. With the help of a physician and a nurse practitioner both specializing in geriatric care and both with elderly parents and in-laws, the following questions and insight were developed for you to ask communities offering healthcare services.

1. What is the staff to resident ratio?

This will tell you how much time and attention they can provide.

2. Do you have a physician serving as a medical director? How often is that person on site?

Timely healthcare is essential. If a physician is not on site regularly, then residents must be transferred off site for healthcare services.

3. Describe your nursing staff as to license (registered nurses) and unlicensed staff (CNA, CRMA, PSS).

The more licensed staff usually reflects on a higher the quality of care. Healthcare problem can often be found earlier and hospitalization can be avoided.

4. What hours are the licensed staff hours on site? Are they available after hours?

A licensed staff should be there days and evenings and available on-call for nights.

5. Is transportation available to doctor and dental appointments? Does the facility have someone to go along with the resident?

If not, you may be providing this or paying someone else to take you or your loved one.

6. Are lab draws and x-ray provided in the facility?

If not, you may be providing this or paying someone else to take you or your loved one.

7. Describe your activity staff and schedule.

Socialization and physical activity are proven to contribute to overall health.

8. Are meal plans assessed by a dietitian? Can you accommodate special diets?

Well balanced meals that are tasty and have eye appeal are important as well as being able to accommodate for special diets including gluten-free and low sodium.

9. Describe the communications between staff, residents and family members.

Obviously you want a clear line of communication between the caregiver and the family.

10. Describe some of your standards of care.

If they look at you with a blank stare, that tells a lot. Most facility use best practice models to monitor safety and medication errors. They should be looking at infection control measures, employee immunization, medication errors, falls, and other safety issues.

11. Describe how the care plan is developed.

The proper way to develop a care plan is with an interdisciplinary team to include the physician, nursing, activities, dietary, therapist, and the resident and family members.

12. Notice how they inquire or don't inquire about you or your family members needs.

They should be looking at you or your family member as an individual; looking at your history and what environment would make you most comfortable. The care plan should be fashion with the needs of the resident, not the needs of the facility.