

Choosing Independent Living

Use this **checklist** to review options:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Is the community clean and well maintained?
- Is ample parking available for residents and visitors?
- Are exterior maintenance, snow removal and landscaping included in the monthly fees?
- Are there multiple floor plans available?
- Can residents decorate their cottages, condos or apartments according to their personal tastes?
- Is the community pet friendly?
- Does the community have safety features, such as handrails and grab bars?
- Do individual residences include safety features, such as emergency alert and fire suppression systems?

RESIDENT AND STAFF INTERACTION

- Is the community well staffed overnight?
- How does the community handle residents who need additional care and support?
- Do staff members undergo screenings and background checks prior to employment?
- Are housekeeping and laundry provided?
- Are transportation services available?
- Do caregivers interact with residents in positive ways?
- What is the staff-to-resident ratio?

FEES AND COSTS

- What services are included in the monthly fee?
- What services are available for an additional fee? What are the fees?
- How often do resident rate increases occur?

- Are subsidies available? How do residents qualify for subsidies? Is there a waiting list?

DINING SERVICES

- Does the dining room look and smell inviting?
- Are the dining room tables, chairs and linens in good condition?
- Are residents allowed to invite guests for meals?
- Can residents select their own meal times, or are there designated meal times?
- Are three daily meals, snacks and beverages included in the monthly rate?
- Does the resident committee work with the dining staff to develop menus?
- Can the community accommodate special dietary needs?
- Is there a dietician or nutritionist involved in meal planning?

ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Are activities scheduled throughout the day and evening?
- Are fitness classes offered?
- Are there dedicated spaces for resident clubs and informal gatherings?
- Does the community offer regular outings to local restaurants, theaters, museums and other destinations?
- Are there outdoor spaces available for walking, gardening and recreation?
- Are volunteer programs available?
- Do the residents appear engaged and energetic?

Considering Independent Living

Is the lifestyle right for you?

The questions below will help seniors and their families determine if an Independent Living community may be the right choice for them.

- Do you feel isolated in your home?
- Do you find it difficult to get around your neighborhood?
- Do you lack relationships with your neighbors?
- Do you have difficulty driving?
- Do you wish that someone else would drive you to your errands and appointments?
- Do you have a hard time getting out of the house?
- Do you frequently go for weeks without seeing friends?
- Do you wish you had more of a social life?
- Do you miss participating in favorite activities?



- Do you find it difficult to run errands alone?
- Do you have a difficult time keeping up with home maintenance?
- Do you find it challenging to clean your home?
- Do you feel unsafe in your home or your neighborhood?
- Do you find it hard to climb the stairs into or inside your home?

If you answered "yes" to most of the above questions, you may want to consider Independent Living. However, you will also want to consider your current and future health care needs before making a final decision. For instance, if you have a chronic health condition, you may want to consider an Assisted Living community, or a community that offers both Independent Living and higher levels of care on the same campus.

For many seniors, Independent Living offers the perfect lifestyle—one with no home maintenance or transportation worries and with plenty of social and recreational opportunities. With a wide array of communities available locally, you are certain to find a community that offers you both the independence you desire and the security you need.

Choosing a Life Plan Community

Use this **checklist** to review options:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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- Are there multiple floor plans available?
- Can residents decorate their cottages, condos or apartments according to their personal tastes?
- Is the community pet friendly?
- Does the community have safety features, such as handrails and grab bars?
- Do individual residences include safety features, such as emergency alert and fire suppression systems?

LEVELS OF CARE

- What levels of care does the community offer?
 - Independent living?
 - Assisted living?
 - Skilled nursing care?
 - Short-term rehabilitation?
 - Memory care?
- Do residents have access to in-home care should it be needed?

RESIDENT AND STAFF INTERACTION

- Is the community well staffed overnight?
- How does the community handle residents who need additional care and support?
- Do staff members undergo screenings and background checks prior to employment?
- Are housekeeping and laundry provided?
- Are transportation services available?
- Do caregivers interact with residents in positive ways?
- What is the staff-to-resident ratio for each level of care?

FEES AND COSTS

- What services are included in the monthly fee?
- What services are available for an additional fee? What are the fees?

- How often do resident rate increases occur?
- Are there multiple contract options?
- Do some contract options offer entrance fee refunds?

DINING SERVICES

- Does the dining room look and smell inviting?
- Are the dining room tables, chairs and linens in good condition?
- Are residents allowed to invite guests for meals?
- Can residents select their own meal times, or are there designated meal times?
- Are three daily meals, snacks and beverages included in the monthly rate?
- Does the resident committee work with the dining staff to develop menus?
- Can the community accommodate special dietary needs?
- Is there a dietician or nutritionist involved in meal planning?

LOCATION

- Is the community conveniently located for friends and family to visit?
- Is the community in a safe neighborhood?
- Are there shopping, dining and entertainment options near the community?
- Is the community near preferred medical providers?

OVERALL IMPRESSION

- Does the community look and feel like a place you could call home?
- Talk with residents and their family members.
 - What do they like about the community?
 - Can they recommend it?
 - Did they consider other options when searching for a community?
 - Why did they choose this community?

Source: www.wherewoulivematters.org, a senior living resource powered by the American Seniors Housing Association (ASHA)