

64 Questions To Ask When Choosing An Independent Living Community

If you're thinking about moving to an Independent Living Community, you need to be equipped with enough knowledge to ask the right questions. Spend time researching on the Internet and by phone before you spend time on a personal visit. When you visit, take this checklist. Ask lots of questions. Take notes. Collect all printed information they provide; go home, study it completely, and follow up with more questions. Keep a complete folder on each community you visit.

General Questions

Is there housekeeping? How frequent? Is there an extra charge?

Is there a linen service available?

Am I provided with transportation to doctor, grocery store, etc., if needed?

How often is transportation available? Is there an extra charge?

What bills are included in monthly fee, if any?

What is the facility's policy on pets?

Is the building locked at night? What additional security measures are present?

Environment

Is the décor attractive and homelike?

Are there common areas for family and guests?

Can residents go in and out easily?

Can residents personalize their own apartments? How much?

How is the noise level in the facility?

Is the lighting good throughout the residence?

Are flooring materials non-skid and low pile?

Are halls wide enough to accommodate a walker if I should need one?

Is temperature controlled by apartment owner or by the facility?

Staffing

Is there a cheerful, respectful, and friendly interaction between staff and residents?

Does the administrator seem to know the residents and interact with them?

Who is in charge of the management of the community after hours and on the weekends?

What is the staff turnover?

Is there staff on the premises 24 hours a day?

Personal Care and Wellness

What criteria are used to determine whether a resident is appropriate for the community?

Is there an assessment done prior to admitting a resident?

Does the facility like to know about resident's interests?

Do residents and staff look clean and well groomed?

What happens if my needs change; I need more help, become incontinent, become confused....?

Can a resident use his/her personal aides?

Are residents given an alarm of some kind to alert the front desk?

Can residents use their own pharmacy?

Safety

Is the facility sprinklered in the event of a fire?

Are the exits clearly marked?

Are doors to the buildings locked; if so what time? When doors are locked, how does one access their apartment? Are there alarms on any doors?

Are there call bells in each bathroom?

Are there grab bars installed in the bathroom by the toilet and in the shower/bathtub?

Is there a fire emergency plan? Are emergency plans publicly displayed?

Are background checks performed on all staff?

Activities and Socializing

- What type of activities does the community offer?
- Do the activities appeal to you?
- Do they post an activity calendar each month?
- Is there a specific person to coordinate and assist with activities?
- Are there activities available after hours and on weekends?
- Do residents have input into activities offered? If yes, how?
- Is it possible to plan events for families and guests?

Meals/ Dining

- How many meals do you get a day?
- Can you choose if you would rather have lunch or dinner; is there an option?
- Are there alternate food selections offered for each meal?
- Does the kitchen have a chef or a cook?
- Can you have a luncheon or dinner party catered by the kitchen? If so is there private dining available?
- Is there an alternative to the dining room meals?
- What is the attire for dining?
- Obtain the current week's menus for review.

Emergencies

- Who decides what is an emergency and whether to call 911?
- What system is in place after hours and on weekends?
- What kind of emergencies is staff expected to handle and how are they trained for them?
- Is there a nurse close by in case of an emergency?

Economics

Does the contract clearly spell out requirements, fees, penalties?

Does the community have an entry fee?

Is it comparable to that in other communities?

Is it refundable? What portion?

What are the monthly fees? What about increases?

Who is the developer of the community?

How long have they been in business?

Do they have a good reputation in their field?

Where are they headquartered?