

# SENIOR HOUSING

*What You Need to Know*



**SNAP**  **for Seniors**™



## **When you need to make important decisions about senior housing, knowledge is everything.**

Whether driven by an acute medical situation or simply a lifestyle choice, finding the right senior housing option for yourself or a loved one can be a challenge.

The first step to success is to understand what it is that you really need from a senior housing community. Think about what factors are most important to you and your loved ones while you read through this booklet.

Then, get a list of the senior housing space options in your desired area. You can call your local Area Agency on Aging (which you can locate at [n4a.org](http://n4a.org)) or visit

snapforseniors.com to get a comprehensive list of all senior housing providers, searchable by specific care and lifestyle criteria.

Once you have a short list of potential options, visit each place at least once. This booklet will help you understand what questions to ask when you visit.

## Assessing Your Needs

*It's important to carefully assess all your needs when choosing housing.*

**Cost:** What resources do you have to pay for senior housing? You may want to speak with a financial planner or estate attorney to help you understand and organize your options.

**Location:** It's best to find senior housing that is convenient for relatives and friends to visit. The more you visit your loved ones, the more secure you are that they are being cared for properly and are happy. If your loved one has to be cared for in a different state, try to choose a location that is easy for family members or friends and that is familiar to your loved one.

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**Care Services:** Assess all of the care needs of the person who is moving to senior housing. Health issues are most important, and if the person has special needs, such as Alzheimer's disease, tendency to fall, disabilities, etc., make certain that the facility you choose is trained in handling those specific situations.

**Room Type:** Moving to senior housing is sometimes a difficult adjustment, so it's important to try and find the best type of room in a residential home or apartment-style living in a larger community. Check how many people are sharing a room.

**Meals:** Try to visit a facility during mealtime. Are the residents provided a suitable area for eating? How does the food smell? Is the food healthy? Do residents have input into meal planning or options to eat ethnic or specialty foods? Are healthy snacks available at all times? Are utensils and serving dishes senior-friendly and clean? Is mealtime a pleasant experience? Are those who need help with eating cared for with dignity and respect? If you live nearby and want to bring food in, is this allowed?

**Activities:** Find out what activities are available for residents. Are there options? Are there organized activities in the community, such as shopping, movies or visiting a local park?



Are there planned exercise times to keep residents moving and active? Are all residents offered activities regardless of their level of mobility? Are computers available?

**Amenities:** Think about the things that would make the potential resident feel “at home” such as telephone access, TV in the room, courtyard or outside area, space to garden, windows that open, temperature control in rooms, pet therapy, senior-friendly part of town, housekeeping, privacy and any other desired amenities that add up to a higher quality of life.

## Other Housing Factors

*There are some things that are absolutely required when choosing senior housing.*

**Payment Terms:** Make sure the facility accepts the payment form you're planning to use. If paying with private funds, ask what happens when the money runs out and the resident is eligible for Medicaid. Is the resident eligible for the Veteran's Administration and Attendance program? Is long-term care insurance applicable?

**License and Certification:** Is the facility licensed and/or certified to provide the care you or your loved one requires? Are all licenses and certifications up-to-date? Ask to see their license records.

**Healthcare Services:** What services are provided? Are staff members licensed and/or certified to perform these services? Get a list of what is included and what requires additional fees. Is staff on site 24/7? What happens in a healthcare emergency? How often is each resident's health assessed in the facility?



## snapporseniors.com

A free senior housing information source that lists all licensed senior housing, provides helpful tools to assist you with assessing your needs, and matches your needs against available options.

**Personal Services:** Is help provided for bathing, dressing, toileting, mobility, eating, taking medications, and other activities of daily living (ADL)? Are special personal needs of the resident taken care of? How often are the beds changed?

**Personal Possessions:** Check the agreement carefully regarding personal possessions. What happens if the resident has a prolonged hospital stay? What possessions are the resident allowed to bring? Are personal possessions covered by insurance against theft or damage?

### **Length of Stay and Discharge:**

How long, and under what conditions, may a resident stay in the facility?

What terms or conditions could cause the resident to be discharged?

How will the facility support the resident if a move is necessary?

**Privacy:** Make sure the facility will allow for the level of privacy desired by the resident. Are doors closed when residents are changed or bathed? Is there a space where visitors can see the resident in private?



### **Quality Evaluation:**

snappforseniors.com provides links directly to every Medicare-certified facility's Nursing Home Compare quality and inspection report on medicare.gov. Your local long-term care ombudsman's office can

provide information about facility performance, and can be located through [Itcombudsman.org](http://Itcombudsman.org). Other methods include asking facilities to see their most recent state survey (they must comply upon request), and checking references of other residents family members.



**Community Characteristics:** It is important that residents feel welcome and comfortable in their new home. Does the staff speak his or her language? Does the community adopt a person-centered culture?

**Security Issues:** Are staff member backgrounds checked? Are all entrances and windows secured? Is there an emergency evacuation plan? Are there smoke alarms and a sprinkler system?

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# Professional Resources

*The following is a list of some professional groups that can help ease the transition to senior housing.*

## **The Alzheimer's Association**

**(alz.org):** The leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's disease care, support and research.

## **Case Management Society of America**

**(cmsa.org):** The leading non-profit association dedicated to the support and development of case management.

## **The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a.org):**

AAAs were established to respond to the needs of Americans 60 and older in every local community.

## **National Academy of Elder Law**

**Attorneys (naela.org):** An association of attorneys in the public and private sector who deal with legal issues affecting seniors.

## **National Association of Senior Move Managers (nasmm.org):**

A group of professionals who specialize in facilitating a smooth transition for seniors moving from the home into a senior housing community.

**Seniors Real Estate Specialists (seniorsrealestate.com):** A designation offered by the National Association of Realtors to agents who specialize in senior real estate services.

**The Society of Certified Senior Advisors (csa.us):** A multi-discipline group of professionals who have earned the Certified Senior Advisor designation through specialized education.



## Simplify *your* search for senior housing at: **snapforseniors.com**

- *Access to comprehensive and objective listings.*
- *Many listings include photos and show current availability.*
- *Advanced search criteria available to screen your search results.*

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