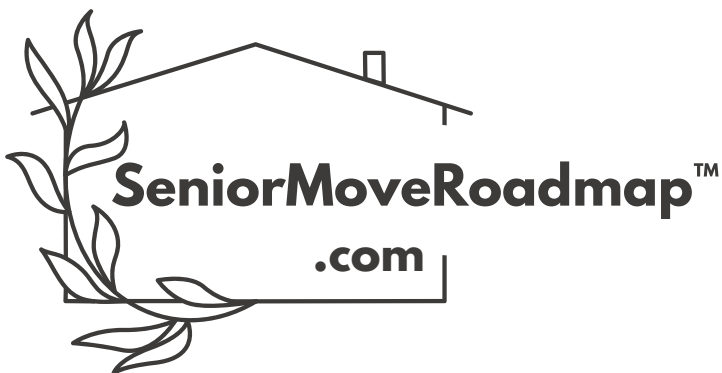


Senior Living Comparison Guide

Finding the Right Community



How to find the community that's best for you .



Included Within:

- Know what level of care your parent actually needs before you tour
- Compare communities side by side with a built-in scoring tool
- Handle the emotions that come up — for your parent and for you
- Questions that reveal what a community won't volunteer
- Red flags that most families miss until it's too late

What is Assisted Living?



Assisted living offers a supportive lifestyle that combines comfortable housing, personalized assistance with daily needs, delicious dining, and a wide range of convenient services and amenities. It's an ideal choice for those who cherish their independence but would benefit from a helping hand with tasks such as dressing, bathing, and managing medications

It might be time to look at assisted living communities when:

- Daily tasks like bathing, getting dressed, and cooking have become physically strenuous
- Home maintenance, including cleaning and yard work, is now difficult to manage
- Complex health conditions are affecting your lifestyle or mobility
- You're experiencing anxiety, depression, or feelings of loneliness
- Early cognitive impairment is beginning to impact your daily life



Note: if cognitive impairment is the primary concern, memory care communities may be more appropriate — see the Before You Tour section of this guide.

Comparing and Choosing the right community



Not all assisted living communities are the same.

Supportive services and lifestyle amenities can vary significantly from one community to the next. Factors like location, environment, lifestyle fit, and cost all play an important role. That's why it's essential to do your homework — take tours, ask the right questions, and know exactly what to look for when comparing different options.

We're here to help you make the best possible decision for yourself or for a loved one

Use this guide to help keep track of the communities you visit and to compare what each one has to offer. Print any or all of the pages and to take them with you to the community or use this to complete on your computer, tablet or phone.

Types of Senior Living Facilities

Choosing the right senior living community starts with understanding the different options available. From active, independent lifestyles to communities that provide daily support or specialized medical care, each type serves a unique purpose. Here is a short summary of the different types of facilities. Knowing these differences helps families match their loved one's current needs — and future needs — with the most appropriate setting. I hope this helps the conversations ahead.

- **Independent Living (or Active Adult/55+ Communities):** For active, self-sufficient seniors (typically 60+). Focuses on maintenance-free housing, amenities, social activities, and community without daily care assistance. Residents handle their own daily activities but want fewer homeownership responsibilities.
- **Assisted Living:** Provides help with activities of daily living (ADLs) like bathing, dressing, medication management, meals, and housekeeping. Residents live in apartment-style units with some independence and on-site support. Many have tiered "levels of care" (e.g., low/basic, medium/intermediate, high/advanced) based on individual needs.
- **Memory Care:** Specialized secure units or standalone facilities for individuals with Alzheimer's, dementia, or other cognitive impairments. Offers 24/7 supervision, structured routines, secure environments, and cognitive therapies in a safe, often locked setting.



- **Skilled Nursing Facilities (Nursing Homes or Long-Term Care):** Provides 24/7 medical/nursing care, rehabilitation (short-term), wound care, therapy, and support for chronic conditions or post-hospital recovery. Higher medical oversight than assisted living.
- **Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) or Life Plan Communities:** Offer a full continuum on one campus—typically independent living, assisted living, memory care, and skilled nursing. Residents can "age in place" by moving between levels as needs change, often with entrance fees or contracts.

Before You Tour

Before You Tour: Understanding What Level of Care Your Parent Actually Needs

Choosing the right community starts with an honest assessment of where your parent is right now — and where they're likely to be in six to twelve months. Touring communities before you know what level of care you need is like shopping for a car before you know how many people you're transporting. You can fall in love with the wrong thing.

The honest question families avoid asking:

Is this the right level of care for where my parent is today — or for where they were six months ago? Families often tour assisted living communities because that feels like the right next step, when their parent's actual needs have already moved into memory care territory. Getting this wrong means a second disruptive move sooner than anyone wants.

A simple framework for assessing where your parent:

Look honestly at six areas. For each one, note whether your parent can manage independently, needs some help, or cannot manage safely at all.

- Bathing and personal hygiene.
- Dressing appropriately for the weather and occasion.
- Eating regular meals with adequate nutrition.
- Managing medications correctly and consistently.
- Moving safely around the home and community.
- Managing finances, appointments, and daily decisions *
(sometimes called an IADL — instrumental activity of daily living).



Independently



**Needs Some
Help**



**Cannot Manage
Safely**



If your parent needs help with one or two of these areas, assisted living is often appropriate — though every situation is different and a formal assessment by a physician or geriatric care manager will give you the most accurate picture. If they need help with most of them, or if safety is a significant concern, a higher level of care may be needed. If memory and cognition are the primary issue — not just physical ability — memory care deserves serious consideration regardless of how well they're managing physically.

Before You Tour (Cont...)

On the medical side — get a professional opinion.

Your parent's primary care physician can provide a cognitive screening and a functional assessment. A geriatric care manager — a specialized professional who evaluates seniors and recommends appropriate care levels — is worth consulting if you're genuinely unsure. The cost of a professional assessment is modest compared to the cost of choosing the wrong community.

One more thing: facilities will conduct their own intake assessment before admission. If their assessment suggests a higher level of care than the community you've chosen provides, you'll either be placed on a waiting list for a more appropriate community or face the conversation again sooner than you'd like.

Better to Know Now.

Now you're ready to tour.

One more thing before you start calling: quality communities — particularly memory care — fill quickly. In most markets, the best communities have waiting lists of three to six months. Touring early, even before you think you're ready, is almost always the right move. You can tour without committing. You cannot go back in time.

Once you have a clear sense of the level of care your parent needs, the comparison charts and tour questions in this guide become genuinely useful rather than overwhelming. You're not comparing everything — you're comparing the communities that are actually right for your parent's situation.



A note on CCRCs: Continuing Care Retirement Communities often require substantial entrance fees — ranging from \$100,000 to over \$500,000 depending on the community and contract type — in addition to monthly fees. These contracts are complex legal documents with significant financial implications. Before signing any CCRC contract, have it reviewed by an elder law attorney. This is one of the most important pieces of advice in this guide

Touring Communities Together

Touring Assisted Living Communities Together

Touring communities is an important milestone, but it can stir up many emotions for both you and your parent. It's common for seniors to feel anxious, vulnerable, or even resistant during visits. Below are five of the most common feelings parents experience during this phase, along with empathetic insights and helpful ways to respond.

1. Anxiety and overwhelm about visiting an “unknown place”
2. Feeling like they are being “judged” or that staff are evaluating them
3. Sadness or grief when comparing the community to their current home
4. Fear of losing control (“They’re going to pressure me to decide today”)
5. Embarrassment or vulnerability when seeing care demonstrations (bathing, medication help, etc.)

I'm nervous about this place

1. "I'm nervous about visiting an unknown place"

Why they might feel this way

Stepping into an assisted living community for the first time can feel intimidating and unfamiliar. Many seniors worry about what they'll see, whether they'll be pressured to make a quick decision, or whether the place will feel cold and institutional rather than warm and welcoming.

Helpful Responses

"I know this feels like a big and unfamiliar step. We're just going to look around — there's absolutely no pressure to decide anything today."

"It's normal to feel nervous about something new. We can take our time and leave whenever you want."

"I'll be right beside you the whole time. If anything feels uncomfortable, just say the word and we'll step out."

What to Say Next / Follow-up Tips

"Would you like me to drive, or would you rather follow in your own car?"

"Let's plan something relaxing afterward so we can debrief when you're ready."

"How are you feeling about the tour as we head over?"

Am I being Judged?

2. “I feel like I’m being evaluated or judged”

Why they might feel this way Seniors often worry that staff are watching them closely, assessing their abilities, or deciding whether they “belong” there. This can trigger feelings of vulnerability and a threat to their dignity and independence.

Helpful Responses

- “I know it can feel like you’re on display, but the tour is really about us learning whether this community is a good fit for you — not the other way around.”
- “They’re not judging you. They meet many wonderful people every day and just want to show us what life here looks like.”
- “Your feelings and comfort are what matter most. We’re here to observe, not to be graded.”

What to Say Next / Follow-up Tips

- “If you feel uncomfortable at any point, just squeeze my hand and we can take a break.”
- “What did you think of the staff? Did they seem friendly to you?”
- “Remember, we’re interviewing them as much as they’re showing us around.”

This doesn't feel like home

3. “This doesn't feel like home — everything is different.”

Why they might feel this way It's natural for seniors to compare every detail of a new community to their longtime home. The different layout, smells, sounds, and atmosphere can trigger sadness and grief as they realize how much their life is about to change.

Helpful Responses

- “I know nothing will ever replace our home and all the memories there. We're not looking for an exact replacement — we're looking for a place that can give you comfort and support now.”
- “It's okay if it doesn't feel like home on the first visit. Most people need time and multiple tours before a place starts to feel familiar.”
- “The important thing is whether you could feel safe and cared for here — the ‘home’ feeling often grows over time as you personalize your space.”

What to Say Next / Follow-up Tips

- “What's one thing you saw today that felt nice or comfortable?”
- “If we were to make a space feel more like home, what would be most important to bring with you?”
- “Would you like to see another community so we can compare?”

They are going to pressure me...

4. “They’re going to pressure me to decide today”

Why they might feel this way Many seniors fear that once they walk through the doors, they’ll be pushed into making a commitment before they’re emotionally ready. This creates significant anxiety and defensiveness.

Helpful Responses

- “I want you to know there is zero pressure to make any decision today. This tour is purely for information — we can leave anytime you want.”
- “We’re just gathering information right now. No one expects us to decide on the spot, and I won’t let anyone pressure you.”
- “If anyone asks, I’ll clearly tell them we’re only touring at this stage and not ready to make any decisions yet.”

What to Say Next / Follow-up Tips

- “How are you feeling so far? Do you want to keep going or take a break?”
- “Would it help if I spoke with the tour guide upfront and set the expectation that we’re not deciding today?”
- “Let’s talk about what we saw after we leave — no decisions needed right now.”

I'll feel embarrassed...

5. "I feel embarrassed or vulnerable seeing care being discussed"

Why they might feel this way Watching demonstrations or hearing discussions about help with bathing, dressing, toileting, or medication can feel deeply personal and embarrassing. It can make seniors feel exposed and confront the reality of needing assistance.

Helpful Responses

- "I can imagine this part feels really uncomfortable. It's okay to feel that way — talking about personal care is never easy."
- "They bring this up with everyone. It doesn't mean you need all of that help right now — it's just to show what support is available if you ever do."
- "Your dignity is really important. We can ask them to skip certain parts of the tour if you'd rather not see them today."

What to Say Next / Follow-up Tips

- "How are you feeling after that part of the tour? Would you like to talk about it?"
- "Is there anything you saw today that worried you or made you uncomfortable?"
- "We can always ask for a private tour next time if that would feel better."

Understanding Costs Nationally

South / Southeast & Gulf Coast Senior Housing Costs 2025-2026

SUMMARIZING FACILITIES:

Type of Senior Housing	Typical Monthly Range	What's Typically Included	Best For	Notes / Context
Independent Living	\$2,200 – \$3,800 (median ~\$2,900)	Apartment-style housing, meals, housekeeping, transportation, social activities, maintenance	Active seniors needing little to no daily assistance	Most affordable region overall. Many Gulf Coast areas sit at the lower end.
Assisted Living	\$4,200 – \$6,000+	Meals, housekeeping, personal care (bathing, dressing, meds), 24/7 staff, activities	Moderate help with daily activities	Varies most by care level; add-on fees common.
Memory Care	\$5,300 – \$8,000+	Specialized dementia care, secure unit, higher staffing, cognitive programs	Alzheimer's/dementia requiring 24/7 supervision	Strong options in FL, TX, and NC.
Skilled Nursing Facility / Long-Term Care	Semi-private: \$6,000 – \$8,000 Private: \$8,000 – \$10,000+	24/7 medical/nursing care, therapies, meals, full assistance	High medical needs, post-hospital recovery, or advanced frailty	Texas and many Southern states remain among the most affordable nationally.

Key Factors Affecting Costs:

- **Level of care:** Base rates assume moderate needs; extra hours of personal care or specialized services (e.g., incontinence, wandering prevention) add \$500–\$2,000+/month.
- **Room type and amenities:** Studios cheaper than 1–2 bedrooms; upscale communities with resort-style dining, spas, or on-site medical add premiums.
- **Location:** More affordable in suburbs; higher near medical centers.
- **Inflation & contracts:** Most communities raise rates annually (5–8%). Some offer all-inclusive pricing; others itemize.

Understanding Costs Nationally

Midwest Senior Housing Costs (2025–2026)

SUMMARIZING FACILITIES:

Type of Senior Housing	Typical Monthly Range	What's Typically Included	Best For	Notes / Context
Independent Living	\$2,500 – \$3,900 (median ~\$3,000)	Apartment-style housing, meals, housekeeping, transportation, social activities, maintenance	Active seniors needing little to no daily assistance	Most affordable region overall. Houston and many Gulf Coast areas sit at the lower end.
Assisted Living	\$4,300 – \$6,500 (median ~\$5,000–\$5,800)	Meals, housekeeping, personal care (bathing, dressing, meds), 24/7 staff, activities	Moderate help with daily activities	Varies most by care level; add-on fees common.
Memory Care	\$5,400 – \$8,000 (median ~\$6,500–\$7,500)	Specialized dementia care, secure unit, higher staffing, cognitive programs	Alzheimer's/dementia requiring 24/7 supervision	Strong options in FL, TX, and NC.
Skilled Nursing Facility / Long-Term Care	Semi-private: \$7,000 – \$9,500 Private: \$8,500 – \$11,500+	24/7 medical/nursing care, therapies, meals, full assistance	High medical needs, post-hospital recovery, or advanced frailty	Generally more affordable than coastal regions.

Key Factors Affecting Costs:

- **Level of care:** Base rates assume moderate needs; extra hours of personal care or specialized services (e.g., incontinence, wandering prevention) add \$500–\$2,000+/month.
- **Room type and amenities:** Studios cheaper than 1–2 bedrooms; upscale communities with resort-style dining, spas, or on-site medical add premiums.
- **Location:** More affordable in suburbs; higher near medical centers.
- **Inflation & contracts:** Most communities raise rates annually (5–8%). Some offer all-inclusive pricing; others itemize.

Understanding Costs Nationally

Northeast Senior Housing Costs (2025–2026)

SUMMARIZING FACILITIES:

Type of Senior Housing	Typical Monthly Range	What's Typically Included	Best For	Notes / Context
Independent Living	\$3,500 – \$5,500+ (median ~\$4,000)	Apartment-style housing, meals, housekeeping, transportation, social activities, maintenance	Active seniors needing little to no daily assistance	Highest regional costs driven by real estate and labor.
Assisted Living	\$6,500 – \$9,500+ (median ~\$7,000–\$8,500)	Meals, housekeeping, personal care (bathing, dressing, meds), 24/7 staff, activities	Moderate help with daily activities	Among the most expensive in the country (especially NY, MA, NJ, CT).
Memory Care	\$7,500 – \$11,000+ (median ~\$8,500–\$10,000)	Specialized dementia care, secure unit, higher staffing, cognitive programs	Alzheimer's/dementia requiring 24/7 supervision	Significant premium over assisted living.
Skilled Nursing Facility / Long-Term Care	Semi-private: \$9,500 – \$13,000+ Private: \$11,000 – \$15,000+	24/7 medical/nursing care, therapies, meals, full assistance	High medical needs, post-hospital recovery, or advanced frailty	Highest regional nursing home rates nationally.

Key Factors Affecting Costs:

- **Level of care:** Base rates assume moderate needs; extra hours of personal care or specialized services (e.g., incontinence, wandering prevention) add \$500–\$2,000+/month.
- **Room type and amenities:** Studios cheaper than 1–2 bedrooms; upscale communities with resort-style dining, spas, or on-site medical add premiums.
- **Location:** More affordable in suburbs; higher near medical centers.
- **Inflation & contracts:** Most communities raise rates annually (5–8%). Some offer all-inclusive pricing; others itemize.

Understanding Costs Nationally

West Coast / Southwest Senior Housing Costs (2025–2026)

SUMMARIZING FACILITIES:

Type of Senior Housing	Typical Monthly Range	What's Typically Included	Best For	Notes / Context
Independent Living	\$3,200 – \$5,000 (median ~\$3,600–\$4,200)	Apartment-style housing, meals, housekeeping, transportation, social activities, maintenance	Active seniors needing little to no daily assistance	Varies widely; urban coastal areas much higher than inland Southwest.
Assisted Living	\$5,500 – \$9,000+ (median ~\$6,000–\$8,000)	Meals, housekeeping, personal care (bathing, dressing, meds), 24/7 staff, activities	Moderate help with daily activities	California and major West Coast metros are among the priciest.
Memory Care	\$6,800 – \$11,000+ (median ~\$8,000–\$10,000)	Specialized dementia care, secure unit, higher staffing, cognitive programs	Alzheimer's/dementia requiring 24/7 supervision	Often 25–40% above assisted living; highest in CA and WA.
Skilled Nursing Facility / Long-Term Care	Semi-private: \$9,000 – \$13,000+ Private: \$10,500 – \$15,000+	24/7 medical/nursing care, therapies, meals, full assistance	High medical needs, post-hospital recovery, or advanced frailty	Real estate and labor costs push prices well above national averages.

Key Factors Affecting Costs:

- **Level of care:** Base rates assume moderate needs; extra hours of personal care or specialized services (e.g., incontinence, wandering prevention) add \$500–\$2,000+/month.
- **Room type and amenities:** Studios cheaper than 1–2 bedrooms; upscale communities with resort-style dining, spas, or on-site medical add premiums.
- **Location:** More affordable in suburbs; higher near medical centers.
- **Inflation & contracts:** Most communities raise rates annually (5–8%). Some offer all-inclusive pricing; others itemize.

Amenities & Services

Living life on your own terms, while feeling a true sense of belonging and purpose — that’s what it really means to feel at home.

This feeling becomes even stronger when you’re supported by the right amenities and services that nurture your physical, social, and emotional well-being. From vibrant social events and convenient housekeeping to reliable transportation and the assistance you need to maintain your independence, these thoughtful options help you thrive every day.



Check boxes where applicable.

Amenities & Services	Community Name	Community Name	Community Name	Your Notes
Outdoor Areas				
Pet Friendly				
Scheduled Transportation				
Fitness				
Salon/ Barbershop				
Housekeeping				
Laundry/Linens				
Library				
Game Room				

Amenities & Services (continued)

Amenities & Services	Community Name	Community Name	Community Name	Your Notes
Art Studios				
Guest Suites				
Heated Pool				
Vegetable Garden				
Theatre				
Garage				
Covered Parking				
Putting Green				
Hobby Rooms				

Feel Free to Write In Amenities / Services that are important to you

Dining

Food does more than sustain you or nourish your body — it's one of life's great pleasures. In some assisted living, you may be able to find and enjoy chef-prepared meals and savor delicious, high-quality entrées whenever you choose.

A friendly dining team is always welcome and staff that takes the time to truly know your personal preferences and dietary needs may be important for you.



Check boxes where applicable.

Dining	<hr/> Community Name	<hr/> Community Name	<hr/> Community Name	Your Notes
Flexible Dining Options				
Accommodating Menu Options				
Restaurant Style Dining				
24 Hr Snacks/ Beverages				

Health & Wellness

Health and happiness go hand in hand. Holistic wellness matters because it focuses on your unique potential to achieve personal goals — no matter what physical or emotional challenges you may face. A truly personalized approach to holistic health supports you as you grow and evolve, helping you meet your individual needs and expectations at every stage of life.



Check boxes where applicable.

Health & Wellness	Community Name	Community Name	Community Name	Your Notes
Individual Care Plans				
24 Hr Health Monitoring				
Medical Services Offered On Site				
Dental?				
Home Health?				
Podiatrist				
Other?				
On Site Rehab (PT, OT, Speech)				

Feel Free to Write In Amenities / Services that are important to you

Health & Wellness (continued)

Check boxes where applicable.

Health & Wellness	Community Name	Community Name	Community Name	Your Notes
Easy access to hospitals and medical offices				
Transportation to medical appointments				
Dedicated Staff for Health and Wellness				
Health & Wellness Resources				
Team to Resident Ratio				

Feel Free to Write In Amenities / Services that are important to you

Engagement

Socialization plays a powerful role in improving mental health, mood, cognition, and memory. Living in a community that offers daily opportunities to build meaningful relationships and participate in engaging programs can help you enjoy a happier, healthier, and more fulfilling life.



Check boxes where applicable.

Engagement	Community Name	Community Name	Community Name	Your Notes
Group & Individual Engagement				
7 Days/Week Programming				
Group Outings				
Off - Site Events with Transportation				
Dedicated Staff				

Feel Free to Write In Amenities / Services that are important to you

Apartments

Before you give up homeownership, housekeeping, and maintenance chores for the ease of apartment living, it's important to find a place you can truly make your own. You may want to choose from a variety of floor plans— each offering a comfortable, secure, and welcoming space that feels like home. Your living environment should also extend to beautiful secure outdoor areas, a game room, and other engaging amenities that enrich daily life.



Check boxes where applicable.

Apartments	Community Name	Community Name	Community Name	Your Notes
Preferred Floor Plans				
Kitchenette Spaces				
Preferred Views				
Downsizing Resources				
Moving Resources				
Standard Amenities				
Safety Features				
Handicap Accessible Restrooms				
				23

Feel Free to Write In Amenities / Services that are important to you

Safety & Security

Feeling secure is an essential part of feeling truly comfortable and supported. That's why a good assisted living community provides around-the-clock support from caring team members on site, giving you peace of mind knowing help is always available when you need it. For added security, a reliable visitor and vendor management system should also be in place.



Check boxes where applicable.

Safety & Security	Community Name	Community Name	Community Name	Your Notes
Security Features				
On Site Nursing 24/7				
Concierge On Site 24/7				
Security On Site 24/7				
Emergency Response System Inside Rooms				
Easy Access to Hospitals / Medical Offices				
				24

Feel Free to Write In Amenities / Services that are important to you

Pricing & Fees

Cost is an important factor when choosing an assisted living community. The right community not only meets your needs and fits your lifestyle — it also fits comfortably within your budget.

When your monthly rate includes a broad range of services and amenities, you receive greater value while still enjoying personalized options tailored to your preferences.



Check boxes where applicable.

Pricing & Fees	Community Name	Community Name	Community Name	Your Notes
Community / Entrance Fee				
Refund Policy				
Monthly Fee Structure				
All Inclusive or Fee for Service				
Level of Care Fee Structure				
Utilities Included				
Wifi				
Cable				
Electricity / Water				

Overall Impressions

First impressions matter.

When you visit a community, pay attention to the overall atmosphere and whether residents and team members seem genuinely happy, engaged, and welcoming. Take time during your tour to observe what each community offers and whether the lifestyle, services, and amenities feel like a good fit for your individual needs and preferences.

Check boxes where applicable.

Overall Impressions	Community Name	Community Name	Community Name	Your Notes
Greeting				
Professional? Happy?				
Caring?				
Resident Interactions				
Do I Feel Comfortable?				
Could I Live Here?				
Is this a Good Value				
Clean? Any Off Putting Smells?				

Additional Tips:

- Ask to join a resident event
- Ask for downsizing resources
- Make a dining reservation
- Ask for residence agreement
- Visit more than once at different times

Additional Questions

Choosing the right assisted living community is a deeply personal decision. To help you make the best choice for yourself or a loved one, here are some important additional questions to ask during your research and tours. These questions address key areas such as daily life, care, safety, costs, and family involvement.

- What does a typical day look like for residents, and how much flexibility is there in daily routines?
- How do you create and update personalized care plans for each resident?
- What is the staff-to-resident ratio during day and night shifts?
- How are medications managed, and what training do staff members receive?
- What levels of care are available if my needs (or my parent's needs) change over time?
- How does the community support residents who want to maintain as much independence as possible?
- What transportation services are offered for medical appointments, shopping, or outings?
- Are pets allowed, and what are the guidelines for bringing a beloved pet?
- How does the community handle emergencies, including medical situations or inclement weather?
- What kinds of social, recreational, and wellness programs are offered on a regular basis?
- Can I (or my parent) continue seeing our current doctors and healthcare providers?
- What is included in the monthly rate, and what services may have additional fees?
- How does the community welcome and involve family members in activities and visits?
- What is the process for moving in, and how do you support new residents during the transition?
- How do you handle feedback or concerns from residents and their families?
- What is the community's policy on aging in place, and how do you support residents as their needs evolve?

Red Flags to Consider

As you walk the halls, observe interactions, and ask questions, trust your instincts. A warm, engaged environment where residents look cared for and happy is the goal. Below are 10 key red flags to note during your visits. Spotting even one or two doesn't always mean you should rule out a facility immediately, but multiple flags warrant deeper investigation, follow-up questions, or crossing it off your list. These insights draw from common issues reported across various facilities and National experiences.

- **Persistent unpleasant odors or visible uncleanliness.** Lingering urine/feces smells, dirty floors, cluttered hallways, or overflowing trash are major warning signs of poor housekeeping and potential neglect. While occasional odors can occur, consistent issues (or heavy chemical masking scents) often point to understaffing or cost-cutting that affects resident health and dignity.
- **Signs of chronic understaffing.** Look for unanswered call lights, residents waiting long periods for help, caregivers appearing rushed or overwhelmed, or very few staff visible on the floor. In many markets, understaffed hallways have been a frequent complaint. Ask about current staff-to-resident ratios and turnover rates—high turnover often leads to inconsistent care.
- **Residents who appear neglected, withdrawn, or unengaged.** If most residents are parked in wheelchairs in hallways with little interaction, look unkempt, or seem overly sedated, this can indicate insufficient personal care or activity programming. Engaged residents chatting, participating in activities, or moving about independently are a positive counter-sign.
- **Lack of meaningful activities or a “ghost town” atmosphere.** Empty activity rooms during scheduled times, residents left alone for long stretches, or only passive entertainment (e.g., a TV with no interaction) suggest limited programming. Quality communities offer varied, resident-led activities—ask to see a current monthly calendar and observe one in progress.
- **Evasive or unclear answers about costs, contracts, or care levels.** If staff dodge questions about base rates, extra fees for personal care, annual increases, or what's truly included, proceed with caution. Hidden costs or pressure to sign quickly without full disclosure are common pitfalls. Request itemized pricing in writing and compare it to your earlier research.

Red Flags to Consider (Continued)

- **Poor maintenance or obvious safety hazards** Broken elevators (a recurring issue in some Houston-area communities), dimly lit hallways, cluttered exits, or outdated emergency systems are red flags for safety and management problems. For memory care, unsecured doors or inadequate wandering prevention are especially concerning.
- **Negative or indifferent staff-resident interactions** Staff who seem dismissive, rude, or disengaged with residents (or with you) signal deeper cultural issues. High management turnover or reluctance to introduce you to the executive director or nursing staff should also raise concerns.
- **Proper licensing not available.** Every state requires assisted living and memory care communities to be licensed and to undergo regular inspections. Ask to see the most recent inspection report and any complaint history. Reputable communities share this information without hesitation. To verify a community's compliance record, search your state's health department or licensing agency website.
- **High-pressure sales tactics or rushed tours.** If the tour feels overly sales-oriented, you're discouraged from visiting unannounced, or there's urgency to decide before you've seen other options, it's a red flag. Good communities welcome multiple visits, including at different times of day (e.g., mealtimes or evenings).
- **Inadequate specialized care for memory care needs (if applicable)** For memory care tours, watch for insufficient dementia-specific training, lack of secure perimeters, or one-size-fits-all programming that doesn't address wandering, agitation, or cognitive needs. Staff should be able to clearly explain their approach and show evidence of specialized protocols.

Final Tip: After every tour, jot down your immediate impressions while they're fresh. Compare notes across communities using a simple checklist. If something feels "off," trust that instinct— There are plenty of excellent options. Consider bringing a trusted family member or senior advisor on tours for a second set of eyes. The right fit will feel like a welcoming extension of home, not just a facility.

Next Steps & Add'l Resources

You've Toured—Here's What to Do Next

After touring, most families are deciding between 1–3 communities.

Next steps :

- Eliminate any that didn't feel right, Focus on Top Choices, and Compare care, cost, and overall fit - Not just appearance.

👉 Don't keep searching endlessly—clarity comes from deciding, not touring more places.

The right community only works if it fits your timeline.

Next step:

- Confirm current or upcoming availability, Understand move-in timelines, and Ask what is required to secure a spot

👉 Good communities fill quickly—timing matters.

ALIGN THE MOVE WITH YOUR PLAN

Choosing a community is only part of the process.

You still need to coordinate:

- The move-in timeline
- Downsizing and logistics
- What to do with the home

👉 This is where most families start to feel overwhelmed.

That coordination is what the rest of the Roadmap was built for.

PART OF A SIMPLE SYSTEM

The Senior Move Roadmap: a step-by-step process to help families move forward with clarity



Is it Time?



Have the
Conversation



Make the Plan



Understand
the Costs



Choose the
Right Place



Prepare the
Home



Make the
Move

Choosing a community is a big step—but coordinating everything around it is where most families need help.

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