

## SENIORS

# Helpful steps to take in finding suitable housing for seniors

By *Bradley Dubin*

CONTRIBUTOR

*(Editor's note: This is the second in a series of articles about finding the right retirement housing solution for seniors.)*

As an insider who owns senior living residences and as a caring grandchild who has searched for the perfect senior home for a loved one, here are my tips to help you find the perfect retirement community for your family member:

**Step 1. Anticipate.** Although no adult child looks forward to the day when they will be forced to consider alternatives for an elderly parent, start thinking about it now. Too many families wait until there is a crisis before considering options. Difficult decisions then have to be made in a short time and in the midst of emotional or physical turmoil.

**Step 2. Where to start.** Decide whether a senior living residence is prefer-

able to home health care or moving your family member into your home. Home health care costs are prohibitive for many; having your loved one live with you raises numerous personal issues. Senior living is often a preferred avenue for many reasons, including the care, services and amenities, socialization, sense of security and cost.

**Step 3. Do your homework.** There are a variety of senior living options: independent living, assisted living, memory care, nursing homes and continuing care retirement communities. Educate yourself to ensure that you make the right choice. The South Carolina Assisted Living Federation of America website ([scalfa.org](http://scalfa.org)) provides a summary of each option.

**Step 4. Location, location, location.** Identify the appropriate geographic area. While some family members select location based upon where the person previously resided and is most familiar, many feel that the community's proximity to

family would be best.

**Step 5. Make a list.** Create a comprehensive list of senior living residences in your selected geographic region. (Next issue, we will provide hints of where to look in order to find senior living residences in your area.)

**Step 6. Prepare questions.** Be prepared when visiting any property by writing a list of questions. SCALFA and the U.S. Medicare websites ([scms.gov](http://scms.gov)) provide a checklist of questions to ask when visiting a senior living community.

**Step 7. Great expectations.** Establish goals and expectations, and determine if the community's philosophy meets them. High standards of care, resident satisfaction and quality of life are important.


**Step 8. Check it out.** Visit and compare various communities, as each one is unique. Typically, the marketing director will give you a tour of the community. He or she will explain the services, amenities

and programs. Be mindful that his or her job is to sell the community. Do not be afraid to ask residents about the community's environment, physical features, services, amenities, care, staffing, financials, policies, activities, food, etc. After narrowing your list, tour those residences at least one more time at different hours.

**Step 9. Think ahead.** Assess a community based on your family member's current needs as well as future changes in the level of his or her care.




**Step 10. Decision time.** You may quickly realize that there is no blueprint to help in the process. It is one of the most difficult times in the life of a family, and there will be hard questions many concerns. If you conduct research and have a plan, your family is more likely to reach the right decision.

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