



# March 2018 Newsletter

## Helping Seniors Stay in Their Own Homes

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### *Living Options for Seniors*

#### **HOME CARE**

Home care allows older people to remain in their own homes while receiving the assistance they need to help them remain independent. Typically, home care involves providing assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) such as bathing, dressing and meal preparation or Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) such as transportation, paying bills, making appointments and simply being there to provide companionship and emotional support. Home care services range from once a week to 24 hours a day depending on the needs of the client.

#### **INDEPENDENT LIVING COMMUNITIES**

Senior independent living communities cater to seniors who are very independent with few medical problems. Residents live in fully equipped private apartments. A variety of apartment sizes are available from studios to large two bedrooms. Fine dining services are offered with custom-designed meal packages. Often, residents can choose to pay for a specified number of meals per day. Frequently, there are numerous social outings and events to choose from for entertainment.

#### **RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES**

Residential care homes are private homes that typically serve residents who live together and receive care from live-in caretakers. These homes offer assisted care services for seniors who want a more private, home-like community. Assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing and dressing are typically provided. Amenities and nursing services vary greatly between homes. Ask about their services when you tour.

#### **ASSISTED LIVING**

Assisted Living communities are designed for seniors who are no longer able to live on their own safely but do not require the high level of care provided in a nursing home. Assistance with medications, activities of daily living, meals and housekeeping are routinely provided. Three meals per day are provided in a central dining room. Residents live in private apartments which frequently have a limited kitchen area. Staff is available 24 hours per day for additional safety. Most assisted living communities provide licensed nursing services. The hours vary greatly, so be sure to ask when you visit. Social activities and scheduled transportation are also available in most communities. A special unit for Alzheimer's residents is available in some, but not all communities.

#### **NURSING HOMES**

Nursing homes provide around-the-clock skilled nursing care for the frail elderly who require a high level of medical care and assistance. Twenty-four hour skilled nursing services are available from licensed nurses. Many nursing homes now provide short-term rehabilitative stays for those recovering from an injury, illness or surgery. Long-term care residents generally have high care needs and complex medical conditions that require routine skilled nursing services. Residents typically share a room and are served meals in a central dining area unless they are too ill to participate. Activities are also available. Some facilities have a separate unit for Alzheimer's residents.

SENIOR HOUSING OPTIONS COMPARISON

Feature or Service	Independent Living Communities	Assisted Living	Nursing Home	Alzheimer's Care
Meals Per Day	Meal Plan Options	3+	3+	3+
Medication Management	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Personal Care*	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mobility Assistance	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accepts Wheelchairs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alzheimer's/Dementia Care	No	Varies	Varies	Yes
On-Site Nurses*	No	Varies	Yes	Varies
Transportation	Most Yes	Most Yes	Yes	Yes
Incontinence Care	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Housekeeping	Varies	Yes	Yes	Yes
Personal Laundry	Varies	Most Yes	Yes	Yes



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## Helping Seniors Stay in Their Own Homes

Senior Care Corner | Kathy Birkett

### *End of Life Decisions—Don't Let Senior Loved Ones*

### *Wait Until The End Of Life To Make Them*

We love life and want it to last forever, but the reality is that our time on earth is finite. No one knows when the end of life will come for themselves or the ones they love, so being prepared to face it as we want and with dignity requires us to plan for the eventuality. Facing the multitude of decisions that accompany the end of a loved one's life can be overwhelming and heart wrenching for family caregivers and their senior loved ones. Everyone has the right to create their own end of life plan, to withdraw or refuse medical treatment or to choose pets, visitors, or music to surround them near the end. Everyone has the right to make his or her own decisions until such time when they are no longer capable and need someone to step in for them. But how do we as family caregivers approach our seniors to make these decisions? How can we learn what decisions for the end of life our senior's may have already made? This is one of the toughest conversations families will have but one of the most important for them to begin.

#### **Legal Aspects at the End of Life**

*(Please keep in mind we are not attorneys and not providing legal advice. If unsure about laws or legal process where your seniors live, you should contact an elder law attorney or other legal expert.)*

In addition to the straightforward tasks of planning for the end of life such as funeral arrangements, absolution of your senior's personal possessions or finances or saying goodbye, it is important to ensure your senior's medical directives are executed according to their wishes. Here are a few documents that should be created and may require advice of experts like elder law attorneys to be sure they are done in accordance with the laws of the state where your senior resides.

- **Durable power of attorney for healthcare and/or finances**—Who will be named proxy to control the decisions made for your senior when he/she can no longer make them?
- **DNR**—Creation of a DNR or Do Not Resuscitate advance directive is important to be done before a crisis occurs. It requires a doctor's signature instructing other healthcare providers.
- **Living will**—This is an advance directive that will express your senior loved one's desire about what medical interventions will be used to keep him alive. It can detail his or her wishes for the use of mechanical ventilation for breathing, if a tube feeding will be used to keep them alive (artificial nutrition or hydration), or if other (or any) heroic measures should be used.
- **Five Wishes** - Five Wishes is a document that is specific to a variety of different items that you and your senior may not have yet considered. They include decisions such as those contained in a living will but also other more personal things to be done at the end of life.

You can prevent having to make tough choices by keeping the line of communication open with all your loved ones. Don't be afraid to talk about death and dying, it is a natural part of life and unavoidable.

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