

# Where to Live?

## Not an Easy Decision

By Kaye Sharbrough

Congratulations! You are thinking about moving to (or helping someone else) some type of Senior Housing such as the types listed in our Choices box. Now, how do you educate yourself about them and find the homes or communities that will meet your needs? How do you get complete and accurate information? Let's see...

### Websites & 800 phone numbers

Unless you love getting lots of emails and phone calls from strangers... don't put your contact information, name or care needs into a form on a website. And don't share with a kindly voice at the other end of a Toll Free phone number. These are usually national companies who have scant data on our local market, have not seen the local homes, do not meet personally with families and probably do not know California laws or requirements. They will offer you a partial list of some communities (with whom they have contracts) but they probably will not be what you need.

### Lists from senior centers, counties, cities

—Many different entities such as these offer a nice list of the homes or communities in their jurisdictions. This could be a good place to begin but these lists will have only contact information and may be organized by type (which may or may not truly reflect what services the homes provide). Nor do these lists attempt to give you subjective or qualitative information.

### Anecdotes or endorsements from social workers, care managers, neighbors, friends or others in your social circle

—It can be very useful to have a trusted person offer their personal experiences or insights.

### CHOICES FOR SENIOR HOUSING:

- Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC- Buy-in)
- Independent living
- 55+ Community
- Assisted Living
- Memory Care
- Residential Care Home
- Manufactured Home Community
- Shared Housing–Co-housing
- In-Law Unit–Granny house

But be aware of the limitations of the person and their resources and experiences. There may be a better solution for you that is outside of their knowledge.

**Books & periodicals**—Like lists from centers and government, these can be an excellent starting point but be aware of the date of publication as the information may be outdated. Categories can be confusing and/or inaccurate. Also, once again, you are unlikely to find a book that discusses the quality, care or reputations of the listings. Examples of good resource books are *Avenidas' Where to Live*, and *Alternatives for Seniors*.

**Yelp or similar reviews**—Don't start your process by eliminating communities or homes based upon these reviews. But it probably doesn't hurt to read some reviews of your last few final choices. Like my grandma said, take those reviews with "a grain of salt." Nothing can replace your own personal evaluation. Some of my favorite movies are ones that the critics or friends did not like.

### California community licensing division

—This is the official State location for finding details on all licensed care. Since it is comprehensive for nursery schools, developmentally disabled, etc. as well as types of senior housing, it is a bit complex. But this site has just recently started posting the last few Inspection and Citation reports online. Like other reviews, this may be a resource best used for checking on your "finalists". If you begin your search here, you will likely become overloaded. <http://cclcd.ca.gov/PG3581.htm>

### Local senior housing referral agencies—The broadest expertise for your education is probably a local referral agency.

These companies have active family counselors that have toured the local homes and communities and can work in a personal way with you and your family. The good ones know the homes and reputations of each. They can help you avoid homes that are inappropriate for your needs or budget. They can even tell you which ones have the décor that you think your Mother will like.

There is no cost to you. (Most homes & communities offer agencies a referral fee.) However, you can expect a more complete overview of ALL the local homes. And, since the counselor is also local and has a reputation to maintain, you can expect more. To find a senior housing referral agency in your area, you can ask a local senior community who they like to work with. Or you can probably even "Google" for one!

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*To learn more about senior housing, call Kaye Sharbrough at 650-851-5284. Or visit [www.SeniorSeasons.com](http://www.SeniorSeasons.com).*