

Evaluating Care Options

In the past, the only option seniors had for living outside of their home was a nursing home. Now, there are multiple options and each one has its own advantages and benefits. In addition, there are a number of care options available for seniors who want to stay in their own home. And within each of the different categories of care, there are many different specific institutions. The choices can be truly overwhelming. How do you evaluate these many options, and make the best possible decision?

Evaluate Needs and Desires

The first step in the decision-making process is to decide what kinds and what level of care the person needs. Out of the following care options, what does the person most need and/or desire?

- Freedom from house and yard maintenance?
- Prepared meals?
- Transportation?
- Privacy?
- Arranged activities?
- A basic apartment?
- Socialization?
- Full-time medical and supervisory care?
- Assistance with bathing and grooming?
- Assistance getting around?
- Assistance remembering and taking medications?

If possible, discuss and put together a list of the person's specific needs and desires. This list will help you and the care recipient to get a full picture of what kind of care arrangements are needed.

Research Options

Now you are ready to research options and compare their features with your list of needs and desires. Ask for recommendations, look in the phone book or call your local Area Agency on Aging to get information about the different options in your area.

Most likely, you will find a variety of choices, and each one will offer distinctive features. If the senior would simply like a chance to socialize or you would like some respite time, it might be wise to consider local senior centers or elder day care options. If it is freedom from yard and house maintenance, a retirement community might be in order. If, however, more help is needed, an assisted living facility or a nursing home might be a good idea. You'll have to match up what each facility has to offer with the needs and desires of the senior.

Visits

After focusing on the kind of facility you're looking for, you will be able to narrow down your choices considerably. After ordering brochures or getting other information, you will probably want to schedule a visit. Go with the senior for these visits, and come prepared with a list of questions and concerns. An on-site visit is usually the best way to get a feel for the day-to-day operations of a facility.

