



## **5 Essential questions you should ask of any community you are considering moving to and why you should ask them:**

*What kind of community is this? Independent Living? Assisted Living? Secured Memory Care? Are all levels of care located on site?*

You need to make sure you are looking at the appropriate care setting for yourself (and your spouse if applicable) right now and for the foreseeable future. An Independent Living community without Assisted Living or Secured Memory Care is not a good fit if you have a diagnosis of a progressive memory disorder, for example, as you will need to move to another community as your needs progress. If you are ok with making a future move, then go with the community that fits your needs best right now.

*Can you tell me about care limitations? (In particular if you have an illness that likely points towards more advanced long term care.) Given my current diagnosis, under what circumstances might I need to move to another community?*

You want to make sure that the community provides the specific services you know you will probably need based on your diagnosis. A community doesn't have to provide all types of advanced care, since not everything will apply to you, so ask with your needs in mind. Be transparent about your diagnosis so you don't get too far into the process only to find that the community will not be able to meet all of your needs.

*Does your community have flexible licensing?*

This is important to ask because if you move in as an independent resident, you'll want to know whether you'll have to move to a different apartment or area of the building if you need to add assisted living services. Flex licensing allows the community to apply an assisted living license to the apartment you are already living in. In a building with Flexible licensing, independent and assisted living residents are not segregated into different areas of the building nor do they have to use separate dining rooms. Neighbors do not know who is or isn't on assisted living services, as this is private information. It doesn't define you within the community.

### *May I look at your most recent DSHS Survey?*

You want to look at the actual DSHS survey, not just the letter saying they have corrected their deficiencies (although this is good to see.) Assisted Living and Memory Care Communities are subject to inspections by DSHS every year. Have they had recent citations? How many? How serious? How widespread? It is not uncommon for communities to have one or two citations, but they may be very minor (paperwork filed late on an employee or water temp set a degree too high, etc.) However if they have had multiple, widespread or systemic violations which put residents at risk for harm, you really want to understand what changes they have made to ensure the problems truly have been addressed and are not likely to happen again. You may want to go onto the DSHS Aging and Disability services website to see whether they have had letters of enforcement, had fines issued or been in stop placement - and if it has happened multiple times. Be aware that a strictly Independent Living Community, without any Assisted Living licenses on site, is not subject to DSHS inspections and does not have to adhere to any of the rules and regulations that apply to health care settings, nor are the responsible for monitoring resident health changes or general wellbeing.

### *What is your average annual employee turnover rate?*

If a community has frequent employee turnover, they are more likely to have problems with which ever departments are affected. Constant turnover in the kitchen and dining room for example means they may have service issues – food coming out slow or cold, or wait staff bringing you the wrong thing. Long term loyal staff in a community means a better trained and happier staff, fewer mistakes, and a friendlier more familiar atmosphere. Staff who get to know your personality and your preferences will provide better service and make you feel more at home. They are also much more likely to notice if you have a change in condition which could indicate a serious underlying health issue.

Be sure you know the answers to these 5 essential questions before you make your decision, but don't stop there. There are many other things you may want to know about services and amenities, so design your list of questions based on what is most important to you. You may not find a community that ticks off every single item on your wish list, but the more questions you ask, the closer you will come to finding your ideal community!

***To learn more about Era Living, please visit our website at [www.Eraliving.com](http://www.Eraliving.com)***