

Expect the
Unexpected:

Exploring Senior Living Options

“To expect the unexpected shows a
thoroughly modern intellect.” —Oscar Wilde

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED: EXPLORING SENIOR LIVING OPTIONS

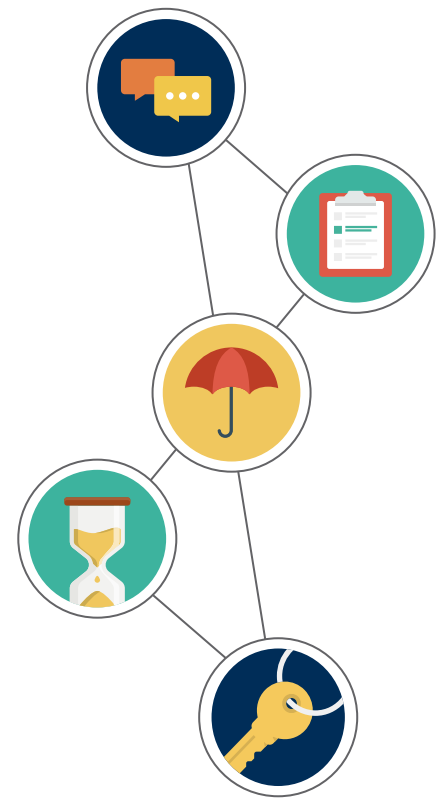
Of all the topics we would like to avoid considering, the need for skilled nursing and assisted living services surely ranks near the top. For many of us, the mere hint of the subject brings to mind a discouraging scenario in which we have sacrificed much of our own agency to the medical-industrial complex. Given a choice, none of us would select that future for ourselves.

Unfortunately, simply refusing to imagine we will ever need more help as we age does not make it so. In fact, as my colleagues Lindsay Youngbauer and Michael Winter noted in their white paper on Long-Term Care Insurance, overall one in two people will need long-term care, including 70% of people over the age of 65.

Even if we can muster the courage to ponder the topic, one of the things we quickly learn is that senior living encompasses a wide array of offerings and even has its own vernacular. Options include an ascending step up in levels of care inclusive of independent living, assisted living, rehab services, and skilled nursing. At-home care approaches seek to help seniors “age in place” with access to health care resources provided in the privacy and comfort of their own home. What is the best way to sort through all of these offerings? Sarah Bishop, Director of Sales and Marketing at The Blakeford of Green Hills in Nashville, suggested asking a single clarifying question: what am I trying to accomplish?



By Mary Raymond
Senior Vice President



INDEPENDENT LIVING	Residents live independently but have convenient access to dining, medical care, entertainment, and hospitality services.
ASSISTED LIVING	Residents can live independently but often receive housekeeping, maintenance, laundry services, transportation and meals as part of their service package.
REHAB SERVICES	Rehab services offer patients occupational, physical, speech, and related therapies, often following a major surgery, injury or accident. Stays are often short-term in nature.
SKILLED NURSING	Residents typically require assistance in nearly all daily activities, including bathing, walking, grooming, dressing, and eating. Stays are usually long-term in nature.

This question helps us narrow our search to meet our needs. Seniors looking for help with cleaning, household chores, meal prep, and general home maintenance might find that hiring additional help or moving to a low-maintenance condominium provides the solution they need. For those looking for some of those same services but with the opportunity to step up their care when and if they need more services, a continuing care retirement community could offer a better fit.

Ideally, seniors should begin planning for this next phase of their lives before declining health forces a move or narrows available living options.

At Blakeford, seniors who qualify for the Life Care Program are able to make their initial move into the independent living residence and then step up their care to include assisted living and/or the health center which includes rehab facilities and skilled nursing care. Throughout their stay at each facility the Community Care Coordinator helps residents make decisions about when a step up in care might be warranted. This personalized care helps seniors and their families navigate the emotional minefield of these decision points. The Community Care Coordinator has the benefit of daily interaction with residents to observe any decline in health but doesn't have the emotional baggage of family history which can make these discussions so fraught.

After working in senior living for nearly two decades, Sarah Bishop has witnessed a seismic shift in senior living options. Early in her career, senior living focused primarily on housing and skilled nursing care. Today independent living communities seek to offer residents social connections, a sense of purpose, and support for a healthy lifestyle. As seniors explore these new options, a whole cottage industry of senior relocation specialists has arisen to support their efforts to declutter, donate, and downsize.

Like they have done with all their previous life transitions, Baby Boomers are rewriting the script for senior living. This generation of seniors is wealthier, better educated, and more comfortable with technology than previous generations. They are living longer than their own parents, and they don't want to sacrifice quality of life as they age. The benefit of these changing demographics is a wide array of senior living options targeted toward meeting residents' physical, mental and emotional needs.

REFERENCES

HELPFUL LINKS:
Senior Relocation Specialists
nasmm.org

seniorliving.com





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