

Questions to Ask During a Senior Living Community Tour

Selecting a senior living community for your elder loved one is a big decision and a profoundly personal one.

You've likely spent hours researching online, had some honest (and maybe emotional) conversations with your loved one, and narrowed down a long list of communities to just a few. Now, it's time to visit those communities in person. This is the moment when everything starts to feel real.

A senior living tour is your opportunity to get a real feel for what life could be like in that community. You'll walk the halls, meet the staff, observe the residents, and ask questions about everything from floor plans and emergency protocols to meal plans and activity calendars. But even the most attentive family member can miss a key detail in the moment, especially when emotions are involved.

To make the most of these visits, bring a list of questions with you. A thoughtful checklist will help you focus, take notes, stay organized, and confidently compare communities based on what matters most to your family.

Think of your list of questions as a decision-making anchor. With a written guide in hand, you'll feel more confident about what to look for, what to ask, and how to evaluate the answers.

Highlights to Look for and Why They Matter

To make sure your checklist covers everything that matters, here's a breakdown of what to look for during a senior living tour and why each area is important.

Entry and Common Areas

First impressions count. The look, feel, and energy of the community's entry and lobby often reflect its culture and attention to detail. These areas set the tone for the entire community and can significantly impact your loved one's initial feelings about their new home.

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Emergency and Accessibility Plans

Peace of mind starts with strong emergency and accessibility protocols. Some states require senior living communities to have an updated [written emergency and disaster plan](#) available for review at any time. Since the pandemic, many states also need communities to have an [infection control](#) plan in place. When done well, emergency and accessibility measures blend into the background, creating a calm, confident atmosphere where residents feel cared for, not confined.

Living Spaces

One of the most important aspects of the tour is seeing where your loved one will live. Take time to carefully assess the available living spaces, not just for square footage but for comfort, layout, and livability. Ask to see different floor plans and sizes if more than one is available.

It's also helpful to visualize your loved one's furniture in the space. Would their favorite chair fit by the window? Is there room for a small bookshelf or framed family photos? Ask whether furnishings are provided or if you can bring your own. You want the space to feel like home.

Dining and Nutrition

Food is often one of the highlights for residents of senior living communities. During your tour, take time to understand how meals are handled and how they would support your loved one's needs and preferences.

Meal plans will vary by the type of senior living community. Most assisted living communities provide three meals a day, along with snacks. Ask whether those meals are included in the base cost or billed separately. Some communities offer flexible meal plans, while others have set inclusions.

The best communities will invite you to stay for a meal. If they do, say yes. Tasting the food gives you a firsthand sense of quality, portion size, presentation, and service. It also lets you observe how staff interact with

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residents during mealtimes and whether the atmosphere feels lively, respectful, and home-like.

Personal Care and Support

For assisted living and skilled nursing communities, the quality of staff will be one of the most critical factors in your loved one's day-to-day experience. Even in independent communities, on-site staff can provide peace of mind. A strong team can make all the difference in your loved one's quality of life, so don't be shy about asking questions.

Understanding the kind of personal care each staff member will provide to your loved one is essential. In assisted living and skilled nursing, every resident should have an individualized personal care plan. Ask who's involved in creating it (nurse, doctor, family), how often it's updated, and who provides each service.

Ask about the staff-to-resident ratio. This tells you how many residents each staff member is responsible for during a shift. Lower ratios generally mean more personal attention and quicker response times. Keep in mind that staffing requirements vary by state and by type of community. The federal government provides [staffing requirements](#) for all skilled nursing communities. Some [states mandate specific minimums](#) for assisted living, while others don't. Communities that exceed minimum requirements often offer better personal care and peace of mind.

Look for communities that provide regular training in areas like dementia care, emergency response, and respectful communication. Ask if staff are certified and how often training is refreshed. Again, be aware that some states [require certain training for staff](#) in senior living communities.

Finally, during your tour, observe interactions between staff and residents. Are staff members friendly and respectful? Do they seem rushed or attentive? Do residents look relaxed around them? These subtle signals often speak louder than stats.

Activities and Amenities

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A vibrant, active community life can be just as important as personal care services for your loved one's overall happiness. Daily routines, social connections, and personal interests matter deeply. Use the tour to explore how the community keeps residents engaged.

Ask if there's a monthly calendar of events. A strong activities program should offer a mix of physical, social, creative, and educational options. The goal is to find a place where your loved one doesn't feel like life is slowing down but opening up. A healthy, connected lifestyle helps older adults stay physically, mentally, and emotionally well.

Resident and Family Engagement

The best senior living communities build relationships with residents and their families. While you tour, take note of how residents seem to feel about their home and the people around them.

Ask how the staff keeps families informed about daily happenings and health updates. Are there weekly or monthly newsletters? Do they send updates by email or through a family portal? Can you call or text a staff member directly if you have a concern?

A strong sense of community includes residents, staff, and families. You should feel welcomed, heard, and supported every step of the way.

Cost and Fees

Understanding the complete picture of pricing will help you plan wisely and avoid surprises. Clarify which services are covered in the base rental price and which amenities and features incur additional fees. Most communities will add personal care services as line items to your monthly rental payment. Ask about historical rate increases and what to expect in the future. Investigate options like long-term care insurance, Medicaid, or veteran benefits that may help offset costs.

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Don't Be Afraid to Ask Questions

That is what a tour is for. This is your chance to address your concerns and uncover the gifts the right community might offer your loved one. Above all, trust that your careful planning will lead to a new chapter where your loved one is supported, engaged, and safe.

Print the checklist below to guide your tour and help you decide you and your loved one can feel good about.

For more information about setting expectations for your tour, please read our blog, *What to Expect When Touring a Senior Living Community*.

Looking for a Place that Feels Like Home?

Explore Kisco Senior Living communities to learn how we support each resident with care, connection, and purpose. You can browse locations, learn about services, and even schedule a personal tour.

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Printable Checklist for Touring Senior Living Communities

Use this checklist to guide your visit, take notes, and compare communities confidently:

Entry and Common Areas

- How were you greeted when you arrived?
- Does the entryway feel clean, organized, and welcoming?
- Is the reception area always staffed?
- Are there directional signs or digital boards to help residents and visitors navigate?
- Are common areas accessible for those with mobility aids?
- What is the overall smell, lighting, and noise level like throughout the community?
- Are the shared spaces (lounges, dining areas, hallways) clean and well-maintained?
- Are residents visible, active, and social, or do common areas feel empty?
- Are there places for residents to socialize, read, or relax?
- Are there outdoor common areas for residents to use?

Notes:

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Emergency and Accessibility

- What support features are available in common areas (grab bars, call buttons, security cameras, locked windows and doors)?
- What support features are available in resident living areas (grab bars, call buttons, locked windows and doors)?
- What are the procedures for visitors?
- Are there staff on-site overnight?
- Are there fire systems (sprinklers, extinguishers, alarms) throughout the building?
- Are there protocols for fall prevention? Infection prevention? Medical emergencies?
- Is there a generator or backup power supply?
- Can I review the most recent inspection or licensing report?

Notes:

Living Spaces

- What floor plans are available, and what's the cost of each?

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- What is the square feet of each floor plan? What are the dimensions of each room?
- Are apartments furnished? Can residents bring their own furniture?
- Are there private bathrooms and kitchenettes?
- Are appliances included? Which ones?
- Can couples live together?
- Are utilities (electric, water, cable, internet) included in the rent?
- Can units be customized or decorated (kitchen cabinets or countertops, paint, flooring)
- How much closet space is available?
- Are there additional storage spaces available?

Notes:

Dining and Nutrition

- How many meals are included per day?
- Are there multiple options per meal?
- Can special dietary needs be accommodated?
- What are the mealtimes? Is there flexible or assigned seating?

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- Are meals delivered to apartments if a resident is unwell or prefers to eat in their unit?
- Can visitors join residents for meals?
- Are snacks and beverages available outside of mealtimes?
- Are there themed meals or special holiday events?

Notes:

Personal Care and Support

- What level of personal care is available here?
- How are personal care plans developed and updated?
- Are nurses or medical staff available 24/7?
- What is the staff-to-resident ratio during the day and at night?
- What types of assistance are offered with daily activities (ADLs)?
- What are the staff training requirements and process?
- Are specialists (dementia care, physical therapy, podiatry) available?
- Can the community coordinate outside services such as hospice or home health?

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- What is the medication management policy? Is self-administration allowed?

Notes:

Activities and Amenities

- What kinds of activities are offered each day?
- Can residents suggest or help plan activities?
- Are there outings or trips? Is transportation provided?
- Is there a gym, fitness class, or wellness program?
- Are there quiet areas like a library, chapel, or garden?
- Are there intergenerational programs or volunteer opportunities?
- Are religious/spiritual services available on-site?

Notes:

Resident and Family Engagement

- Are there resident councils or committees?
- How often are personal care plan meetings or family conferences held?

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- Can I speak to current residents?
- How does the community stay in touch with families? Is there a communication platform or portal for families to use?
- How often do you gather feedback from residents and families?
- What happens in the event of an emergency or hospital visit?
- How does the community address complaints or concerns?

Notes:

Cost and Fees

- What is the monthly rental cost, and what's included?
- How long is the rental lease?
- Are there additional fees for services like transportation or outings?
- What are the fees for ADLs or medication management services?
- Do rates increase annually? If so, by how much?
- Is there a community entrance fee or security deposit?
- Are there pet fees?
- Are there financial assistance programs or partnerships, such as VA benefits or Medicaid, available?

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- Are there refundable deposits or move-out fees?
- What happens if a resident's financial situation changes?
- Are there trial stays or short-term respite options?

Notes:

Kisco Feels Like Home

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