

## What is a Senior Living Community?

When Jean first started thinking about moving, she wasn't sure she was ready. After her husband passed away, their two-story family home was a haven filled with memories. But over time, the upkeep became challenging. The stairs felt steeper and the yardwork harder. Jean also noticed that with her children in their own homes and her neighbors moving away, her days became quieter. Her daughter finally sat her down and encouraged her to start exploring senior living options.

Together, they visited several communities nearby, each with their own charm. They asked about dining, activities, amenities, security, and care options. At first, the choices overwhelmed them. But when Jean toured one senior living community near her daughter's home, she felt something click. "The staff knew everyone's name," she said. "It felt like a neighborhood; warm, friendly, and full of life."

A few weeks after she moved in, her daughter asked what she liked most. Jean smiled. "It feels like I got my freedom back," she said. "No stairs, no yard work; just good friends, interesting activities, and peace of mind."

That's what senior living is all about. It's living life on your terms, with the right amount of support when and where you need it.

## What Exactly Is a Senior Living Community?

A senior living community caters to older adults who want a secure, social, and maintenance-free lifestyle. These communities combine comfort and convenience with services such as dining, housekeeping, wellness programs, and personal care. The goal is simple: make everyday life easier and more enjoyable. Residents at or nearing retirement can focus on what truly matters — friends, family, and favorite activities.

No Two Senior Living Communities Are Alike

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Some senior living communities are made up of cozy single-story homes or cottages, while others feature apartment-style buildings, duplexes, or a mix of both. Some are contained within a single main building, while others span a full campus with several housing options. Though their layouts may vary, they all share the same purpose—creating comfortable, well-designed spaces for older adults.

### Who Is Senior Living For?

Senior living is great for older adults who want to stay independent while enjoying the convenience of built-in care, community, and comfort. Residents may be retired, living with a health condition, or just ready for a simpler, more connected way of life.

For families, senior living means peace of mind. It means knowing that your loved one has support, friends, and meaningful experiences every day.

## So Many Names! What Do They All Mean?

If you've been exploring options, you've probably noticed a few different names for communities that serve older adults. It's common for providers to use several of these terms while promoting their community online. The differences often come down to style, focus, or the balance between autonomy and care. Here are three of the most common names you'll find.

### Senior Living Community

This is the umbrella term most providers use in marketing, websites, and signage. It reflects a holistic lifestyle that combines housing, services, and social opportunities under one roof. Senior living communities focus on residents' quality of life.

### Retirement Community

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This phrase has been around for decades and still captures the idea of a vibrant, maintenance-free lifestyle for people who are ready to enjoy their retirement years. The focus is on freedom, activities, and community.

### 55+ Community

Sometimes called "active adult communities," these communities are for adults aged 55 and older. They're typically autonomous social communities. They may not offer the support or care services found in full-service senior living communities. You'll find these kinds of names for communities catering to retired adults, such as those in Florida and California.

Other terms, such as *Assisted Living*, *Memory Care*, or *Skilled Nursing*, refer to specific types of care and support offered. We'll cover those next.

## Types of Senior Living Communities

No two people age in the same way, so senior living comes in many forms. Each type offers different levels of autonomy, care, and community life.

### Independent Living (IL)

Perfect for active adults who want to simplify life without giving up their individuality. Residents enjoy private apartments, delicious meals, housekeeping, and vibrant social calendars. The community takes care of all interior and exterior maintenance and repairs. Some luxury communities provide amenities like high-end finishes and appliances. They also feature community gyms, spas, pools, wellness programs, and award-winning restaurants. Other IL communities are part of HUD-subsidized housing programs for lower-income seniors.

### Assisted Living (AL)

ALs are designed for seniors who need a little help with daily activities like dressing, bathing, or managing medications. Residents enjoy the same social and wellness benefits as ILs, plus personal care tailored to their needs.

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## Memory Care

These special communities are for individuals living with Alzheimer's or other forms of cognitive decline. Providers focus on keeping residents secure, calm, and active. They do this by providing a familiar, inviting environment. They also offer specialized activities and care that support memory and brain function.

## Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation (SNF)

SNFs cater to older adults experiencing a health concern. For example, seniors who need 24-hour medical care and therapy while recovering from illness, injury, or surgery. Their doctors will admit these folks to an SNF after a hospital stay. They may only stay for a short amount of time before returning home. Or, residents who have complex medical needs due to chronic illness may need an SNF and will most likely stay indefinitely.

## Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs)

CCRCs provide several levels of care within one campus, making it easy for residents to stay in the same place as their needs change. You can start in independent living and transition into assisted or skilled care as your needs change. This may mean changing units within the community, but not always. CCRCs are an excellent option for couples who have different personal and health needs.

## Residential Care Homes (RCH)

These smaller, more intimate communities feel like living in a family home rather than a large campus. Often found in residential areas, these homes serve a small group of residents, usually less than ten. This setup allows for personalized attention and care. RCHs typically provide similar personal care as AL communities. Because of their size, residents and caregivers often develop close, family-like relationships. Meals are usually home-cooked, and the atmosphere is relaxed and familiar. RCHs can be a wonderful option for older adults who prefer a quieter setting or need more one-on-one support. They'll find comfort in a homelike environment with consistent caregivers.

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## Intergenerational Living and Co-Housing

This is a newer trend in senior living, bringing older adults together with students or young families through shared campuses. These communities create meaningful cross-generational friendships. You may see these communities near colleges or universities, where there is a large population of young people in need of housing.

## Village and Aging-in-Place Models

This is another emerging trend in senior living. [The Village Movement](#) is a network of community-based, nonprofit organizations. Caring neighbors form these organizations to reimagine what aging looks like. Each Village matches older adults with local volunteers, social opportunities, and practical services like transportation, light home maintenance, and technology help. The goal is to help older adults live comfortably in the homes and communities they know and love.

[Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities \(NORCs\)](#) are neighborhoods that have evolved as residents age in place. Local organizations coordinate services, health programs, and activities. They help promote self-reliance and well-being.

Every one of these options share a common goal: helping seniors live their golden years with purpose.

## What Is Daily Life Like?

Choice guides life in a senior living community. Residents greet the morning in their own way. Some attend a stretch class, some share breakfast with friends, while others find peace with coffee on their patio. Days usually include meals made by chefs, wellness programs, and interesting activities. They can take part in art workshops, attend lectures, or enjoy movie nights. The staff integrates personal care and healthcare services into the day when and where residents need them. Transportation is available for appointments, shopping, or outings. Residents may join community trips to local parks, theaters, and restaurants.

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Whether seniors love being on the go or simply relaxing at home, there's always something to enjoy in a senior living community.

## How Your Family Can Benefit from Senior Living

Senior living is a good choice for seniors and their families who are looking for:

- **Convenience:** If you're tired of mowing the lawn, shoveling snow, fixing leaky pipes, cleaning the house, and cooking meals, senior living is for you.
- **Security:** 24-hour staffing, security features, emergency response systems, and thoughtful, accessible design reduce risks and support independence.
- **Connection and Companionship:** Neighbors close by, shared meals, and group activities create lasting friendships and reduce loneliness.
- **Whole-Person Wellness:** Senior communities nurture residents' physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and spiritual well-being.
- **Personalized Care:** Different types of communities offer a variety of personal and healthcare services. You can choose a community that works for you now and in the future.
- **Peace of Mind:** Families have a personal stake in their loved one's choice of community. They want to know their loved one is safe, cared for, and surrounded by people who care.

## Senior Living Doesn't Always Mean a Nursing Home

Many people still picture "nursing homes" when they hear "senior living," but the two are not the same. In the past, nursing homes were clinical settings focused on 24-hour medical care of very ill and older adults. These days, the term isn't really applicable to most senior living communities, even SNFs. Today's senior living communities feel like home. They emphasize comfort, individuality, and community, with care that adapts to each person's needs.

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At Kisco Senior Living, we call this The Art of Living Well. This philosophy blends care, connection, and hospitality. Our goal is to help each resident thrive.

## Is a Senior Living Community Right for You or Your Loved One?

If you or someone you love wants more freedom, activities, and companionship, it might be time to explore senior living. Touring a community, meeting the residents, and experiencing the lifestyle firsthand can help you decide what feels right.

At Kisco Senior Living, we create communities where residents live looking forward, supported by heart-led hospitality and a genuine sense of belonging.

To start your new life at Kisco, please call your local community for a personal tour.

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