Evaluating Retirement Residences

A Retirement Residence tour is your chance to picture everyday life, ask practical questions and decide whether a residence feels right for you. Look beyond the attractive suite to the people, routines, support and costs.

Use these questions as a conversation guide. Focus on what matters most to you, ask for examples and get important details in writing.

Residence: _____ Visit date: _____

1. Daily Life & Feeling at Home

Why ask: Your comfort will depend on the freedom, relationships and routines you enjoy every day.

- What does a typical day look like, and how much choice do I have over my schedule?
- How do you help new residents settle in, meet people and find activities they enjoy?
- May I see a current activity calendar? What happens on evenings and weekends?
- What are the rules for pets, visitors, overnight guests and time away?
- How do you support my language, cultural or faith preferences?

Notes:

2. Meals

Why ask: Small practical details can make a big difference to your independence and enjoyment.

- Can I try a meal and see a sample menu?
- How do you accommodate dietary needs, food preferences and flexible mealtimes?
- Can I cook in my own suite?
- Do I have to eat all my meals in the dining room?

Notes:

3. Suites & Practical Support

- Can I see the actual suite available?
- What furniture can I bring?
- Is storage available?
- Is parking available?
- How is temperature in the unit controlled?
- Is internet / TV included in the fees?
- Which housekeeping and laundry services are included, and how often are they provided?
- How accessible are the suite, bathroom and common areas?
- What transportation is available for appointments, errands and outings?

Notes:

4. Care Today & As Needs Change

Why ask: Understand the support available now and the circumstances that could require another move.

- How will you assess my needs before I move in, and who will develop and review my care plan with me?
- What help is available with medications, bathing, dressing and mobility? Who provides it, and what costs extra?
- Which staff are on site during the day, overnight and on weekends?
- When is a nurse/doctor available, and how is urgent medical help arranged?
- What happens after a hospital stay or if I develop memory or mobility challenges?
- What care can you no longer provide? How would a move be handled?

Notes:

5. Safety

Why ask: You want to know who will respond when you need help and how concerns are addressed.

- How does the emergency call system work, including in the bathroom?
- Who responds, and how do you monitor response times?
- What happens after a fall, during a power outage or if residents must evacuate?
- How are illness outbreaks managed?

Notes

6. The Full Cost & Agreement

Why ask: A clear picture of the total cost helps you compare residences and plan ahead.

- Can you provide an itemized monthly quote for my suite and current care needs? What is included, and which services or one-time charges are extra?
- How can accommodation and care fees increase? What notice will I receive?
- Can you show what the cost would be if I needed more support?
- What deposits are required?
- What are the refund, cancellation, move-out and temporary absence such as a vacation or hospital stay?
- Can I take the agreement and fee schedule home to review?
- What happens financially if I must move to another care setting or if one partner leaves?

Notes:

7. Staff & Communication

Why ask: You want to know who will respond when you need help and how concerns are addressed.

- How many staff members are there?
- Is there a ratio of staff/clients that you target?
- What training do staff receive?
- Who should I contact with a concern?
- How are complaints resolved?
- How will you communicate with my family or chosen contact, with my consent?

While you tour: Notice whether staff speak respectfully to residents, answer questions patiently and seem available when needed.

Notes

8. Reputation & Making the Decision

Why ask: A second visit and independent checks can help you test whether the promises match everyday life.

- Where can I review your licence, recent inspection reports and any outstanding concerns? How were the findings addressed?
- May I speak with current residents or families about their experiences, and visit again at a different time of day?
- Is a trial stay available? What does it cost, what does it include, and what happens if I decide not to stay?
- What suites are available, is there a wait-list, and what support do you offer before and during move-in?

Notes:

Before You Choose

Ask yourself: Could I feel at home here? Were my concerns taken seriously? Can this residence meet my needs within my budget? Take time to compare your options and follow up on anything unclear.

My main follow-up question: