

SENIOR LIVING TERMS CAN BE CONFUSING!

What's the difference between "Senior Living",
"Skilled Nursing", "Nursing Home", etc.



RESIDENCE 600

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By Residence 600

Understanding the differences between the various senior living terms can be quite confusing. When you're trying to make decisions about a loved one's health care, it helps to know exactly what the words and phrases mean, especially since definitions can vary by state or community.

Senior Living is simply a term that applies to how and where a senior citizen lives.

Independent Living can mean staying in one's own home, but there are **Senior Independent Living Facilities**, which are suitable for people still able to live alone, who would like access to some support and services, such as dining options, medical care or entertainment. There may also be opportunities to have transportation, housekeeping or laundry services at an additional charge. **Senior Independent Living Communities** are much like traditional housing communities with some extra age limits or restrictions. Whether at home, in this kind of facility or in a community, independent seniors have the option of hiring additional health care providers or of using medical alert systems if their conditions change.

Senior Care refers to whatever kind of assistance an individual might need for their particular condition. Also called **Elder Care**, the term covers everything that a person needs for their daily well-being: housing, food, medical care, therapy, community and specialized help.

A **Nursing Home** is a residence for elderly or disabled people who need permanent or long-term continual care. Help with taking medications, eating, dressing, hygiene and other daily



activities is provided as needed. Services included at a nursing home would be the attention of nurses, assistants and aides, as well as occupational, physical and speech therapists. Other terms used for a nursing home are **Convalescent Home**, **Skilled Nursing Unit**, **Rest Home** or **Care Home**. Skilled nursing homes, by any name, include all meals, housekeeping and daily health care, and most provide entertainment and recreational activities suitable to each patient.

A **Skilled Nursing Facility** is an in-patient residence, which provides everything around-the-clock that a person who, because of age or disability, cannot do for themselves independently. Included will be medically-trained staff, licensed nurses, physical and occupational therapists, as well as food and bodily care. Skilled Nursing Homes can be a



temporary option for receiving rehabilitation after an accident or surgery or can be long-term or permanent care.

On the other hand, a **Retirement Home** is any privately-owned facility which can accommodate residents in their senior years. Unlike a nursing home, the focus of a retirement home is to prolong healthy, independent living, allowing seniors to continue in their regular lifestyles with minimal on-site assistance.

Similar to a retirement home is an **Assisted Living Facility**. These facilities are for people who need a small amount of assistance with their daily care, but not the full resources of skilled nursing. Typically, assisted living residents have their own rooms or apartments, but share community rooms and services, which might be one or more meals provided, 24-hour security, medication assistance, and entertainment and recreation. Some facilities provide transportation, perhaps at an additional cost, or off-site activities, such as shopping or dining out.



Housing with Services allows a person to live in a home or apartment with other seniors, while provided with a range of possible services, such as delivered meals, housekeeping and personal care. Extensive care, such as that provided in a skilled nursing facility, is not supplied,



but a small amount of additional help with meals or activities can allow a resident to keep their general independence.

Long-term Care can be provided for an individual at home, often by family members, or in a living facility. Long-term caregivers often help with bathing and other bathroom needs, grooming, moving from a bed to a chair or wheelchair and other activities of daily life. Long-term care might also include community services, such as delivered meals, or adult day-care respite. People often need long-term care after a sudden health condition, such as a heart attack, or due to a general decline in their health.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities are facilities which offer multiple levels of senior care. They will create a contract with the patient or their representative to provide whatever level of care is necessary as time passes. Services may include independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing and hospice care. All levels of care are generally provided in one

facility or campus, so that the resident can continue in a familiar setting and make friendships within the community, no matter what progression their condition takes.



In the long run, when discussing senior care options, one should always ask for definitions of terms used. It's advisable to know exactly what level of care one's loved one will receive, what costs are included with each level of care, and how a resident's progress or decline will affect care and cost. There is nothing wrong with asking questions when getting clear answers will make someone's life and care better, and the best long-term care service providers will be helpful and informative.