

## Senior Care: Glossary of Terms

It's not easy always to navigate the complex and ever-changing environment that is developing around care for our elderly population. You are faced with a whole new vocabulary that surrounds senior care communities. Here are some common terms and definitions that will help you understand this growing market more clearly.

### Active Adult Community

Active adult communities provide seniors with the opportunity to own their own homes while enjoying community with other relatively healthy seniors. With amenities such as pools, therapy rooms, workout facilities, hobby rooms and golf courses, younger seniors and those who don't need organized assistance with activities of daily living can live a well-rounded life inside the community. These senior care communities are the least restrictive form of senior care. They typically limit residents by a minimum age requirement and little else. Disability accessible amenities are often included in homes and common areas.

### Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

Many adults in senior care communities often need assistance with a number of self-care or maintenance activities such as dressing, bathing walking and eating and all the necessary activities required to function on a daily basis such as medicine administration, money management, housework, laundry and meal preparation.

### Adult Day Care

Also called: Adult Day Services. Adult day cares are centers that provide daytime help and outings for seniors who would otherwise stay home alone. Family caregivers who provide in-home care to loved ones find this a solution for offering scheduled breaks for spouses and other caregivers.

### Aging in Place

Senior care is offered in a variety of settings. As seniors continue to age, they may require additional services and higher levels of care. Aging in place is a philosophy that allows individuals to remain in their preferred environment and receive all the necessary care for the rest of their life.

### Assisted Living Facility (ALFs)

Assisted living facilities provide custodial care helping with activities of daily living (See also: ADLs) to aging seniors who do not require more comprehensive or continual medical care. These senior care communities have become more popular over the past two decades because they allow seniors as much independence as they desire and yet the assistance they need to continue an active life.

### Caregiver

A caregiver meets the increasing needs of loved ones in a non-professional environment, usually the home. In-home caregiving still accounts for the majority of senior care today. Family members who provide care for a loved one in their home often need respite care and further assistance from adult day cares to remain personally healthy and free from the overwhelming stress that senior care can place on an already taxed family.

## Cognitive Impairment

While a small loss of cognitive ability is expected as we age, cognitive impairment is a level of loss beyond that which is expected in the natural aging process. Diseases like dementia and Alzheimer's are common forms of cognitive impairment in the aging community. Many senior care communities provide special services for people with cognitive impairment in memory care wings. (See also: Memory Care)

## Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC)

Continuing care retirement communities provide different levels of care for seniors with varying needs and levels of autonomy. They are often large establishments that contain privately owned homes for active living retirement, an assisted living facility, and a skilled nursing home. This cornerstone of the "aging in place" movement offers continuity of residence to seniors who seek social interaction or whose spouses have differing levels of need.

## Custodial Care

Custodial care is the care provided to an elderly individual that is not related to medical care and may include assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs) such as dressing, bathing, meal preparation or travel. In-home caregivers, family members, assisted living facilities and nursing homes all provide custodial care to seniors. This foundational aspect of senior care is most often conducted by aids in senior care communities. See also: In-Home Care and Activities of Daily Living

## Domiciliary Care

In-home care for seniors is the most prevalent form of senior care today. Custodial care can be provided by family members or friends, or can be hired out to trained in-home care aids.

## Elder Care

Elder care is another word for "senior care" and denotes any outside care provided to an aging individual. Senior care communities, including nursing homes, provide elder care.

## Gerontologist

Scientists of gerontology (or the study of aging) provide insight into the world of senior care, giving insight into the biological, psychological and social needs of an aging population. Their research informs the world of elder care. A professional who is trained to work with seniors and have certification or licenses are referred to as Geriatric Case Managers.

## Hospice Care

Philosophy and approach to providing comfort and care at life's end. It can include medical, counseling and social services, and is provided in-home, in specialized hospitals or hospice care centers. It is covered by Medicare and Medicaid.

## Independent Living

Independent living can refer either to seniors who live on their own in their own residence, or those who live in active adult communities. Elderly individuals who live independently are generally healthy and often need little if any assistance with activities of daily living.

## Intermediate Care

Intermediate care is a level of senior care that is often provided at nursing homes, but does not utilize all of the help available in these medical environments. Seniors who could live in an assisted living facility, but prefer to move directly to a nursing home to bypass an extra relocation can receive intermediate care in the skilled nursing facility of their choice.

## Home Health Care

Home Health Care refers to medical and nursing care in the individual's home by a licensed provider. Medicare can cover this care, if it meets certain guidelines regarding a recent hospital stay.

## Long-Term Care

Long-term care is any kind of senior care provided to aging individuals, regardless of the environment in which it takes place. Senior care communities, in-home services and adult day cares may all be part of a senior's long-term care plan.

## Medicaid

Funded through the state to individuals unable to pay for health care, Medicaid can be accessed only when all prior assets and funds are depleted. Income eligibility criteria must be met to qualify for Medicaid, which accounts for about 52 percent of the nation's care costs. Medicaid is the source of payment for almost 70 percent of residents of skilled nursing communities.

## Medicare

Medicare is a government-sponsored health insurance program open to all senior citizens aged 65 or older. Part A of Medicare covers hospital and doctor expenses, as well as hospice and temporary skilled nursing needs. Part B benefits are available for an additional monthly premium, and cover things like mobility aids and durable medical equipment.

## Memory Care Facility

Memory care facilities are senior care communities that offer special services for the cognitively impaired. People with dementia and Alzheimer's disease often need specialized services that are provided in either whole memory care facilities or special memory care units inside senior care environments.

## Nursing Home

Also called: Skilled Nursing Facilities, Convalescent Homes or Rest Homes. Nursing homes are senior care communities that provide comprehensive help with activities of daily living, as well as 24-hour medical support. Nursing homes come in all sizes, from just a few to hundreds of beds. They often provide a variety of social activities, as well as meals, medicine administration, health visits, and physical and occupational therapy.

## Rehabilitative Care Centers

Also called: Transitional Care Facilities. Rehabilitative care centers are specialized facilities that offer intensive rehabilitation services to people recovering from incapacitating events. Some skilled nursing facilities offer rehabilitative care as well.

## Respite Care

Respite care is a much-needed service for caregivers that provides care to their loved one so the caregiver can recharge or tend to other responsibilities. The task of giving care to an aging loved one can be overwhelming, and unfortunately, only a small percentage of caregivers utilize respite care services. If you are caring for an aging loved one, make sure you form a relationship with a respite care agency in case of emergency or for periodic breaks.

## Retirement Home

Retirement homes are senior care communities similar to dorms or apartments that provide custodial care to residents. The term can refer to assisted living facilities or more comprehensive skilled-nursing facilities that offer 24-hour medical supervision. Nursing homes are sometimes referred to as retirement homes.



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