

A GUIDE FOR SENIOR LIVING OPTIONS

Seniors can be overwhelmed by the numerous living options available to them. The Main Line offers a wide array of senior living environments, but navigating and understanding these options can be emotional, time consuming, and overwhelming.



SAGE Care Advisors LLC is a senior care planning and consulting service located in Wayne, PA. Principals, Aimee Lynn Curry, MSW and Debbie Thomas, MSW, are experienced medical social workers with extensive knowledge of senior needs and services along the Main Line. “We started SAGE Care Advisors LLC because we saw first-hand how difficult it can be picking the right living and care environment for your loved ones. We help you make informed decisions that are best for your unique situation, resulting in a better experience for you and your loved ones. The result is less stress for you and your family, along with the peace of mind of knowing you have an advocate listening to your needs and helping guide you along the way.”

When Aimee Lynn Curry, MSW and Debbie Thomas, MSW, co-founders of SAGE Care Advisors LLC, meet with a client one of the first questions they ask is “Where do you see yourself living in one year, five years and ten years?” Seniors almost unanimously reply, “I want to stay in my own home for as long as possible, but I don’t want to be a burden to my family, or have to move because of medical reasons, or lose control by waiting too long.” Curry and Thomas encourage seniors to explore living options before a move is medically necessary.

Many seniors wish to stay in their own homes, and there are many resources that make this a realistic option. However, medical reasons sometimes require a new environment, or seniors search and plan for a new living arrangement that can enrich their lives. “The sooner you assess your living environment for the future, the more control you will have in your choices,” says Thomas. By understanding the verbiage of senior care living options, seniors and their families can plan for an environment that will keep them safe, happy and healthy. Below is a guide for seniors and their loved ones. Curry and Thomas agree, “The most important step is to start the conversation and the process early—to be proactive to a senior’s preferences, rather than reactive to a sudden need.”

IN HOME LIVING SUPPORT

The Main Line offers a wide range of in-home living supports, from a few hours of companion services to skilled nursing needs. Transportation to doctor’s appointments, meal delivery, grocery shopping, and/or a friendly visitor can sometimes be enough to keep the senior safe and happy in his or her own home. Medical home care can also be arranged for those seniors who have skilled needs such as wound care or intravenous medication.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

Several types of facilities cater to seniors’ desire for independent living: Retirement Communities, Senior Apartments and Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC’s). It is important to understand what each specific community offers, from the social activities to the medical services. Most communities offer an array of social activities including fitness classes, arts and crafts, horticulture opportunities, movies, speakers, onsite spas and beauty shops. They offer meal plans as well as laundry and light housekeeping options. A CCRC offers living options from independent apartments, villas, or carriage houses to personal care and skilled care nursing within the same facility.

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PERSONAL CARE/ASSISTED LIVING

These terms are used interchangeably, and these communities provide apartment style housing for seniors who need support with their independence, but who do not require skilled nursing care. Personal Care facilities offer meals, assistance with daily living skills (e.g. bathing, dressing) and help with medications. Staff is onsite 24 hours per day to help when assistance is needed. Most of these facilities offer registered nursing (RN) services during the day, and many offer 24/7 RN care. Facilities offer the same social activities to both their Personal Care and their Independent Living residents. Curry explains, “Personal Care is a common entry point for residents and allows seniors to get the help they need to remain safe in an independent apartment while benefitting from all the social interactions that a facility has to offer.”

SKILLED NURSING HOMES

Nursing Homes provide residents 24/7 medical care by doctors, nurses and other medical staff. Sometimes, residents will stay in a Nursing Home for a short-term stay while they recover from an illness or receive physical therapy, after which they return to their Personal Care or Independent Living arrangement. A resident with more complicated, skilled medical needs may require long-term care.

MEMORY CARE UNITS

Although not often referred to as a separate living option, it is important to mention that many facilities are starting to offer care for people with Dementia or Alzheimer’s. Facilities may dedicate a wing or a floor for Memory Care residents that is monitored and secured to prevent residents from wandering. Residents in Memory Care units eat meals and have their own scheduled activities within their units.