



CCRC SENIORS GAIN PROTECTIONS, VOICE

Seniors in Washington life-plan communities have new rights and a recognized advocate in Olympia.

The law, *Continuing Care Retirement Communities (RCW 18.390)*, took effect on July 1. Signed by Gov. Jay Inslee in April 2016, it provides new protections and disclosures to prospective and current residents.

Also this month, the Washington Continuing Care Residents Association (WACCRA) —leading champion of the new law — was certified by the IRS as a 501(c)(4) non-profit advocacy organization.

Life-plan communities, or CCRCs (continuing care retirement communities), require a substantial front-end investment from residents in exchange for the promise of lifetime housing and various levels of medical and/or assisted care.

Over 13,500 Washington State seniors, living in some 30 CCRCs, have made that investment. The life plan model is becoming increasingly popular, as seniors choose to enjoy community life while ensuring that future disability will not burden their families.

WACCRA was founded in 2015 by residents of several King County CCRCs to address and represent their interests. It is a state affiliate of the National Continuing Care Residents' Association (NACCRA).

The Washington state association's rapid growth to nearly 500 members suggests a strong felt need for organized advocacy on the part of this forward-thinking consumer group of seniors and their families.

THE NEW LAW

The new CCRC law, which is the first to address CCRC resident concerns in this state, introduces the following consumer protections:

- Prohibits a senior living operator from representing itself as a “continuing care retirement community” unless it conforms to a statutory definition that delineates services and the use of a residency agreement.
- Requires CCRC operators to register with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). DSHS will maintain an online registry of CCRCs, to inform consumers of the names and locations of CCRCs throughout the State.



CONTINUING CARE
RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

- Requires that a disclosure statement be given to a “prospective resident” who has paid a deposit to reserve a specific unit in a CCRC.
- Defines a set of “resident expectations,” against which CCRC residents can compare and contrast their actual experiences.
- Establishes a consumer protection complaint and enforcement process through the Attorney General’s Office.

THE ROAD AHEAD

WACCRA is now working with state officials on the law’s implementation, educating legislators on other resident issues, and preparing further legislation to expand transparency and protections to life-plan community seniors.

“The new law is a great start,” says Allan Affleck, Interim President of WACCRA, “but CCRC residents in Washington still lack important regulatory protections that exist in many other states. Our advocacy work continues for the benefit of current and future CCRC residents.”

WACCRA’s legislative efforts include supporting a lobbyist in Olympia and cooperating with fellow stakeholders such as the association of providers, Leading Age Washington.

WACCRA is also reaching out to life-plan residents throughout the state. “The more members we have,” Affleck observes, “the more our consumer group can effectively advocate for life-plan seniors’ shared interests.”

For more information on these and other CCRC issues, visit the WACCRA website at www.waccra.org

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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