



Matching Individual Needs to Services, Care, and Housing Options

A Spectrum of Care Options

“Spectrum of care” refers to all levels of housing, health and personal care services and options to help older adults maintain an optimal quality of life. Individual needs vary from simple assistance with housekeeping to housing that provides medical supervision and services.

This guide provides an overview of needs that may arise as a person ages and the most common care options available to meet those needs. Information is given in an evaluative format that allows the reader to pinpoint the appropriate level of care. This guide is not intended to replace personal research and site visits to care communities.

Evaluating Needs

The primary consideration in evaluating the appropriateness of a person’s current environment is their safety. Certain behaviors may signal that a change of living arrangements should be considered. Behaviors to notice include, but are not limited to:

- medications not filled in a timely manner, or confusion with medication schedules
- cupboards or refrigerator bare and/or filled with spoiled or inappropriate food
- Is mail picked up, checkbook balanced, credit cards paid;
- changes in social behavior or driving ability
- changes in physical appearance or housekeeping practices
- panic calls to family members or health care providers without apparent need

| Provider Type | Living on Your Own | Adult Day | Independent Living | Assisted Living* | Nursing Facility |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| Description of Services | Covers a broad range of housing options (i.e., residential houses, apartments, cottages, condominiums, townhouses, subsidized senior housing, etc.) for older adults who are functionally and socially independent. | Group programming for functionally and/or cognitively impaired adults. Programs may include health care, social and other support services in a protective setting for less than 24-hour care. Generally operate during business hours five days a week; some programs offer evenings/weekends. | Provides a living arrangement that integrates shelter and services for older adults who don't need 24-hour protective oversight. | Provides a living arrangement with shelter and services for frail older persons who are functionally and/or socially impaired and do need 24-hour protective oversight. Some facilities have special programs designed for people who are memory-impaired. | Provides a living arrangement that integrates shelter with medical, nursing, psychosocial, and rehabilitation services for older persons who require 24-hour nursing supervision. Some facilities have special programs designed for people who are memory-impaired. |
| Primary Services Services vary from place to place. Speak to each facility that interests you to see if they offer services important to you or your loved one. | ~ B ~ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age-segregated buildings • Environmental security • Possible coordination of resident services (i.e., activities, transportation, housekeeping, etc.) • OR no services are available | ~ A ~ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set hours of operation • Environmental security • Socialization with organized activities • Respite/weekend care • Meals • Medication administration • Personal care • Therapies • May have medical staff on site some or all of the time | ~ C ~ + B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meals (1-3 per day) • Transportation • Activities • Housekeeping assistance • Assistance with coordination of community-based services | ~ D ~ + B + C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with activities of daily living, such as dressing, hygiene, and meal preparation • Medication monitoring • 24-hour protective oversight | ~ E ~ + B + C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24-hour nursing supervision • Medication dispensed by licensed staff • Skilled nursing may offer specialty care for people with Alzheimer’s disease |

Needs Assessment for Choosing a Care Option

| Abilities | Living on Your Own | Adult Day | Independent Living | Assisted Living* | Nursing Facility |
|------------------|---|---|--|---|--|
| Mobility | Can move about independently; able to seek and follow directions; able to evacuate independently in emergency OR ambulatory with cane or walker. Independent with wheelchair, but needs help in an emergency. | Need minimal assistance with movement; however, transportation to and from the facility are probably necessary. Likely to require some assistance and direction in an emergency situation. | Can move about independently; able to seek and follow directions; able to evacuate independently in emergency OR ambulatory with cane or walker. Independent with wheelchair but needs help in an emergency. | Mobile, but may require escort/assistance due to confusion, poor vision, weakness, or poor motivation OR requires occasional assistance to move about but usually is independent. | May require assistance with transfers from bed, chair, toilet OR requires transfer and transport assistance. Requires turning and positioning in bed and wheelchair. |
| Nutrition | Able to prepare own meals. Eats meals without assistance. | Meals and snacks may be provided. May need minimal assistance, i.e., opening, cutting food, or preparing trays. | Able to prepare own meals. Eats meals without assistance. Generally a minimum of one meal a day is available at a community dining room. | All meals and snacks provided. May require assistance getting to dining room and/or requires minimal assistance, i.e., opening cartons, cutting food, or preparing trays. | May be unable or unwilling to go to dining room. May be dependent on staff for eating/ feeding needs or assistance. |

| Abilities | Living on Your Own | Adult Day | Independent Living | Assisted Living* | Nursing Facility |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|
| Hygiene | Independent in all care including bathing and personal laundry. | Most hygiene needs are performed at the home. May need some assistance, especially with overnight or extended stays. | Independent in all care including bathing and personal laundry. | May require assistance with bathing or hygiene OR may require assistance, initiation, structure, or reminders. Resident may be able to complete tasks. | May be dependent on staff for all personal hygiene. |
| Housekeeping | Independent in performing housekeeping functions (includes making bed, vacuuming, cleaning, and laundry). | Unnecessary | Can perform housekeeping functions (making bed, vacuuming, cleaning, laundry) OR may need assistance with heavy work, vacuuming, laundry, and linens. | Housekeeping and laundry services provided. | Housekeeping and laundry services provided. |
| Dressing | Independent and dresses appropriately. | Should arrive dressed for daily activity. | Independent and dresses appropriately. | May require occasional assistance with shoe laces, zippers, etc., and/or medical appliances or garments OR may require reminders, initiation, or motivation. | May be dependent on staff for dressing. |
| Toileting | Independent and continent. | May require some assistance getting to and from restroom facility. | Independent and continent OR may have incontinence, colostomy, or catheter, but independent in caring for self through proper use of supplies. | Same as "Retirement Community" OR may have occasional problem with incontinence, colostomy, or catheter, and may require assistance in caring for self through proper use of supplies. | May have problem with incontinence, colostomy/catheter, and requires assistance OR may be dependent and unable to communicate needs. |
| Medications | Responsible for self-administration of all medications. | Able to self-administer medications OR facility staff may remind and monitor the actual process. | Responsible for self-administration of all medications OR may arrange for family or home health agency to establish a medication administration system. | Able to self-administer medications OR facility staff may remind and monitor process OR RN/LPN administers medications. | Medications administered by licensed personnel. |
| Mental Status | Oriented to person, place, and time, AND memory is intact, but has occasional forgetfulness without consistent pattern of memory loss AND is able to reason, plan, and organize daily events. Has mental capability to identify environmental needs and meet them. | May require occasional direction or guidance in getting from place to place OR may have difficulty with occasional confusion that may result in anxiety, social withdrawal, or depression OR orientation to time, place, or person may be impaired. | Oriented to person, place, and time, AND memory is intact, but has occasional forgetfulness without consistent pattern of memory loss AND able to reason, plan, and organize daily events. Mental capability to identify environmental needs and meet them. | May require occasional direction or guidance in getting from place to place OR may have difficulty with occasional confusion that may result in anxiety, social withdrawal, or depression OR orientation to time or place or person may be impaired. | Judgment may be poor and resident may not attempt many tasks OR may require strong orientation and reminders. May need guidance getting from place to place OR disoriented to time, place, and person OR memory is severely impaired. May have difficulty following directions. |
| Behavioral Status | Deals appropriately with emotions and uses available resources to cope with inner stress AND deals appropriately with other residents and staff. | May require periodic intervention from staff to facilitate expression of feelings in order to cope with inner stress. | Deals appropriately with emotions and uses available resources to cope with inner stress AND deals appropriately with other residents and staff. May require periodic intervention from staff to resolve conflicts with others in order to cope with situational stress. | May require periodic intervention from staff to facilitate expression of feelings in order to cope with inner stress OR may require periodic intervention from staff to resolve conflicts with others in order to cope with situational stress. | May require intervention from staff to help express feelings and deal with periodic outbursts of anxiety or agitation OR maximum staff intervention to manage behavior OR may be a physical danger to self/others OR expectations are unrealistic and person is uncooperative. |

*Light assist intermediate care at Mather Pavilion.

This document is provided by Mather LifeWays, a unique not-for-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the lives of older adults through lifestyle and residential alternatives that create Ways to Age Well.SM Content is adapted from that provided by the Colorado Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.