

KENDALL GAZETTE

Ask Helen



Senior Housing Glossary: Understanding the Jargon and Alphabet Soup

BY HELEN SHAHAM

Q. *My aunt and uncle's daily activities and social interaction has gotten much narrower in recent months. Both are in their early 80's and still active. Their circle of friends has gotten smaller so now they hardly leave the house. My wife suggested a senior living community may be an ideal solution. With all the different acronyms and terminology, I'm having a hard time understanding my options. Can you provide a glossary of common terms?*

A. I commend you and your wife for realizing the important role a senior living community plays in increasing and maintaining social interaction among residents. As someone who has more than 25 years of experience in the senior housing industry, let me assure you that the initial research can be overwhelming to most people. Here are a few of the most common industry terms. They will help in understanding terminology and in selecting a community that best meets the needs of your relatives.

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs): General term used to describe the basic day-to-day activities of life such as bathing, toileting, eating, dressing and mobility. Used to determine an individual's level of functional impairment.

Administrator: Person licensed to run a nursing home; one who has received training in fiscal, legal, social and medical aspects of running a community.

Aging in Place: Popular concept in senior housing expressing the preference of most older adults to continue aging while residing in one

place, as opposed to being moved between communities as needs change.

Alzheimer's Disease: Degenerative age-related disease that impairs one's cognitive ability. Symptoms may include forgetfulness, wandering and inability to recognize others.

Ambulatory: Ability to walk around.

Assisted Living: State-licensed program offered at a residential community with services including meals, laundry, housekeeping, medical reminders and assistance with ADLs.

Assisted Living Facility (ALF): A community, licensed by the state, to provide assisted living care.

Congregate Living: An assembly of a variety of facilities, services and people under one roof or community to provide facilities and services that otherwise would not be available in total independent living such as dining facilities, health care programs, pharmacy, bank, etc.

Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC): Communities that provide a full range of housing and serves from independent living units to assisted living and skilled nursing. Community guarantees living accommodations and health care services throughout the life of the resident.

Continuum of Care: Describes the degrees of services offered by a particular senior living community. A continuum of care can range from independent living to full-time nursing care and include any and all stages in between.

Home Health Agency (HHA): Public or private agency certified by Medicare that specializes in providing skilled nurses homemakers, home health aides and therapeutic services in an individual's home.

Independent Living: Senior living community designed for those able to live easily on their own, encompassing a wide variety of housing styles and often incorporating additional amenities such as meals and leisure activities.

Long-term Care: Includes a wide range of medical and support services for people with a prolonged illness, degenerative condition, or cognitive disorder.

Non-ambulatory: Describes those with the inability to move independently due to being bedridden or hospitalized.

Nursing Home: Type of senior community offering the most advanced level of resident care, including 24-hour monitoring and full-time supervision.

Personal Care: Care that involves help with eating, dressing, walking and other personal needs but very little or no nursing supervision.

Retirement Community: Communities developed with a continuum of housing available to residents from total independent living to long term health care services.

Skilled Care: Institutional care that is less intensive than hospital care in its nursing and medical service, but which includes procedures whose administration requires the training and skills of a registered nurse.

Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF): Facility certified by Medicare and/or Medicaid to provide skilled care.

Once familiar with these terms, your research should be much easier. If you have additional concerns, contact the Director of Sales at a nearby senior living community. Don't forget to include your aunt and uncle's input. Ultimately, they are the ones who will be moving to the community so it's important for them to also understand the senior housing industry's jargon and make sense of the alphabet soup.

Helen Shaham and her husband Jacob have been operating retirement communities for nearly 30 years. The Palace Suites in Kendall is a luxury Independent Living Community for active seniors. In addition, The Palace at Kendall campus is home to two Assisted Living Residences and a Nursing & Rehab Center. They also operate The Palace Gardens Assisted Living Community in Homestead, Homestead Manor Nursing Home and The Palace @ Home, a Medicare Certified Home Health Agency. Their two newest projects are The Palace at Weston – luxury living for those 55 and over, and The Palace Tel-Aviv, a continuing care retirement community in Israel. They have two communities under development – The Palace at Weston Senior Living and The Palace at Coral Gables. More information can be found on the company website, www.thepalace.org or by calling 305-270-7000.