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Life Care Communities

The extended family has become fragmented by cross-country moves, separations, and divorces. Older family members can no longer rely on or do not care to live with younger family members. Consequently, churches, fraternal groups, and nonprofit community agencies have stepped in to provide life care communities for their older members.

For individuals considering a life care community for an elderly parent, or for themselves, here are a few important financial details.

Fees and Expenses

Typically, residents pay an entrance fee and a monthly payment for each month they live in the community. Prices will vary depending on the type of housing provided and the services that are available. Extra services generally may be purchased for an additional fee. In return for these payments, the community guarantees lodging and care for the long-term — usually for the rest of the resident's life.

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If the community has a waiting list, it may ask for a deposit to secure a future place in the community. The deposit should be

refundable, a point that should be stated in writing. The application should also detail what will happen to the deposit if the applicant changes his or her mind or if the community is unable to provide a spot.

Medicare

Some communities may also require individuals to have both Part A and Part B Medicare coverage and supplemental insurance before admission. Though Medicare does not cover long-term nursing care, it will cover some of the services provided by the community. Supplemental insurance may cover some of the other health and medical services needed.

Nonfinancial Considerations

Since financial details are only part of the equation, here are some other questions to consider when looking at a life care community.

- What group, if any, sponsors the community?
- What obligations does the sponsor have to the community?



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- What is the community's financial status?
 - What is the community's history?
 - Is the community licensed and certified?
 - Can the community provide a copy of the most recent government inspection?
 - Is the community accredited by the Continuing Care Accreditation Commission?
 - Who are the trustees or board members?
 - Who is the director or administrator?
- Do the residents have any say in the rules of the community?
 - What is the community's policy regarding visitors, pets, etc.?
 - What are the recreational and educational opportunities?

Finally, before signing any agreement with a life care community or handing over any money, the contract should be reviewed with a legal adviser.

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