

TIPS ON CHOOSING INDEPENDENT LIVING AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Finding an appropriate Independent Living or Supportive Housing residence takes time and research, but you're already headed in the right direction with The Care Guide. Use The Care Guide, as well as TheCareGuide.com, to identify the residences in the desired area and call ahead to schedule a tour of each. Try to observe "a day in the life" at the residence – perhaps attend some activities or stay for a meal, if applicable. Also, talk to residents about their perceptions of the residence, ask for sample menus and an activity calendar, and inquire about a trial stay as means of “kicking the tires” so to speak.

Since these residences often vary in terms of the services provided, it is important to ensure that you understand what services are included in the posted rental rates, and what services, if any, are available at an additional cost. For example, while Independent Living options typically do not offer support services, in some cases, coordination of community-based supportive services may be provided to tenants. Support Housing options usually offer services such as meals, housekeeping, laundry and recreational programs.

Other things to consider in selecting an appropriate Independent Living or Supportive Housing residence include its location and availability of transportation for shopping, outings and medical appointments, proximity to community amenities such as hospitals and churches, safety and security issues and the cleanliness of the residence.

Senior Citizen's Self-Contained Program

Residences operated under this program provide affordable apartment accommodation for low-income seniors who cannot afford private sector accommodation. They are legislated by the Residential Tenancies Act and the Alberta Housing Act and Regulations. While 24 hour on-duty staff is typically not provided, tenants of these projects have access to staff or other representatives of the management body for emergency situations such as loss of heat or electricity, or emergency plumbing problems, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Rent under the Senior Citizens' Self-Contained Program is based on rent-geared-to-income. This means that, instead of a fixed rental rate, rent is adjusted depending on the tenant's income. In the case of a senior couple or two seniors sharing an apartment, the rent is based on the combined incomes of both. Rent is calculated at 30 percent of adjusted income, which includes all sources of income from all members of the household

Seniors whose income falls below local limits and are functionally independent, with or without the help of existing community-based services, are eligible to apply for the program. Applicants are prioritized on the basis of need. Community residency requirements may also be in place.

Senior Citizens Lodge Program

Residences under this program offer single or double bed/sitting rooms, meals, housekeeping services, linen/laundry and recreational services. Services beyond this basic offering may vary depending on the lodge and the community.

Provincially funded senior citizens' lodges are governed by the Alberta Housing Act and Regulations and are also operated in accordance with a set of approved standards. Each residence is reviewed every three years and those that meet the standards are certified.

Rates are set by local management bodies, so they may vary between different areas of the province. Protection for low-income seniors is established by regulation under the Alberta Housing Act. Currently management bodies may set a minimum monthly rental rate not to exceed \$700. To protect lower income residents, management bodies must either adjust the monthly rate

to ensure that each resident has at least \$265 per month in disposable income or charge the minimum monthly rate.

Seniors who are functionally independent, with or without the help of existing community-based services, are eligible for the program. Applicants are prioritized on the basis of need, which takes into consideration housing need, level of support required and income. It is this priority list that identifies which applicants will be housed first. Applicants may also need to meet local residency requirements.

Generally, these residences do not have health professionals on staff and staff is not trained to care for residents with health or complex personal care needs. All residents who are assessed by the health system as requiring health care can receive these services through the Home Care Program provided by the regional health authority. In addition, some management bodies have made formal arrangements with the regional health authority to coordinate or provide health and personal care services to their residents.

The ability to house residents with health concerns is totally dependent on the services available in the community and the extent to which the resident's health impacts the operation of the residence and the lives of the other residents.

For more information on the Senior Citizen's Self-Contained Program or the Senior Citizens Lodge Program, please call Alberta Seniors at 1-800-642-3853 or (780) 427-7876 in the Edmonton area.

Feel free to contact us at 1-800-311-CARE (2273) or info@thecareguide.com should you have any questions or require further assistance.

Source: The Care Guide (www.thecareguide.com)