

Retirement & Long Term Care Homes

Retirement homes and long term care home (formerly called nursing homes) help people live in a place that provides the accommodation and level of support they need. Retirement homes are privately owned rental accommodation for seniors who are able to manage and pay for their own care. Generally, retirement homes are designed for seniors who need minimal to moderate support with meals, homemaking, and low levels of personal care and availability of staff on a 24-hour basis. These settings enable residents to live as independently as possible, while providing services and social activities. The types of accommodation, from shared rooms to apartments, and amenities vary greatly. Most home offer meals, housekeeping, and laundry, recreational and social programs; however, there can be a wide range of types and levels of homemaking and personal care. You can apply directly to the retirement home provider and the home may assess your needs to ensure that you receive appropriate support or that you meet its eligibility criteria. Since retirement homes are not funded by the government, you are responsible for the total cost of both your accommodation and care. Retirement homes can seek voluntary accreditation through the Ontario Residential Care Association.

Long term care homes, on the other hand, are designed for people who require the availability of 24-hour nursing services, daily assistance with personal care, and/or require a safe environment. They offer higher levels of care than are typically offered in retirement homes. The only way to apply for admission to a long term care home is through a Community Care Access Center and the amount paid by residents is called a co-payment, which varies according to the type of accommodation chosen. Government subsidies are available for residents with lower incomes or who have spouses living in the community. Long term care homes must meet Ministry of Health & Long Term Care standards and are inspected annually.

Most caregivers want to consider the choices their loved one has for living arrangements. This could involved reviewing the services provided by each potential home or the specific programs you are interested in. look at the surroundings; the health, recreational, social and spiritual programs; residents' services; and meals. You may want to get someone else's opinion, ideally someone who has gone through the process of moving a loved one to care facility.

Talking with administration and staff is also important. Some things to consider; is communication relaxed and open? Are all your questions answered directly and to your satisfaction? Will your input be considered by the staff? Above all, compare the facility's philosophy of care with your own. Are you satisfied that your loved one's independence and dignity will be respected?

A helpful booklet that explains about care options is available at no cost by called 1-888-910-1999 and asking for What's Right for Me? A Guide for Seniors and their Families about Home, Community and Residential Care Options in Ontario.