

# Ask the Expert

By Lara Williams

*Editor's note: After the holidays, and visits from adult children who see changes in their parents, many seniors are looking for alternative living arrangements. Some seniors require very little assistance while some need special care.*

*Lara Williams is an expert in the field of senior living communities.*



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***Exactly how independent must I be to live in an independent living residence? Will I have to cook my own meals? Clean my own apartment or house?***

While each residence will have its own admission criteria, independent living is the perfect answer for people who are not ready for assisted living but may need just a little help. The type and number of meals and the housekeeping schedule would vary with each residence. At Riverside at Belfair our Independent and Independent Plus programs offer three chef-prepared meals daily, snacks, weekly housekeeping and linen services all included in a monthly financial program that best suits your lifestyle.

***What kind of activities can I expect to be available in an independent living community?***

Activities at any independent living residence should enlighten, enrich and engage the residents who live there. Having a full-time, dedicated activities director who can schedule and coordinate meaningful programs is necessary to ensure residents get the full benefits of retirement living at an independent living residence. Scheduled activities that interest you and the residence's flexibility to add new programs that residents select are most important. It is not uncommon in an independent living community to be able to select from a variety of volunteer opportunities and social clubs in addition to group outings such as the theater, movies and shop-

ping trips. Riverside at Belfair also offers a fitness center, massage therapists, shuttle service, and 24-hour concierge service.

***What can I do for my spouse who needs memory care? Can we still live together?***

This would be dependent on the services that a specific residence offers. For instance, the Riverside at Belfair campus is a dedicated "Senior Village" that was designed specifically to provide a continuum of care with Independent, Independent Plus and Assisted Living Memory Care, making it easy for residents to remain connected to their spouse, friends and the Riverside family. Our residents move into our community with complete confidence that they will be provided with excellent care and services now and in the future.

***Where do I start when looking for a new place to live?***

Determine the type of services you are looking for. Call and speak to several communities about your desires then schedule tours with the ones who you feel would best meet your needs. Try to attend an activity to get a good feel for the community. Make sure you write a list of your questions to ask during the tour. Be sure the residence offers services that will meet your needs for today and in the future.

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