

Start Planning Today

Few people want to think about aging services and long-term care until they absolutely have to. But oftentimes, the consequence of poor planning is a rushed decision or an abrupt placement. Don't wait until an unexpected illness or injury forces you to consider aging service options.

Crisis planning is not only much more stressful, but it greatly limits choice due to quick hospital discharges and tight availability. Just imagine how picky you were when you selected your last home or apartment, or when you hired a babysitter for your children. The last thing you want to do is to unknowingly cut your options in half because you aren't prepared.

As a consumer, the best way to ensure that you will have all options open to you is to begin planning before you need to. Take a look around while you have the freedom to and you will do yourself a tremendous favor.

Another advantage to early planning is that it allows you to pursue your options at a pace you are comfortable with. After investigating or touring a number of different services or facilities, you will develop a better sense of what your needs and preferences are. And because you have the luxury of time, you will be more likely to find a service or facility that caters to them.

Furthermore, early planning increases the likelihood that you have more of a say in where you move or what type of assistance you

receive. If an elderly person breaks a hip and needs to transfer directly from the hospital to an aging services facility, someone else may have to make critical decisions for them. Studies have shown that retaining choice in care planning increases the likelihood of better adjustment on the part of the elderly individual.

It is particularly crucial and advantageous to plan early for long-term care. Assisted living facilities, continuing care retirement communities, and nursing homes often have waiting lists for admission. When a living unit becomes available, they will offer it to the individuals on their waiting list before an outside applicant.

If you transfer directly out of a hospital, your placement may be determined by what facility has an opening on that particular day. Placing yourself on a waiting list not only better your chances of gaining admission to the facility of your choice, but it also makes you take care of the paperwork and details ahead of time, when you have time to devote to them and aren't dealing with a stressful crisis.

And of course, investigating the conditions of your care will alert you to prepare for its financial burdens.

There is absolutely nothing to lose by planning early, and everything to gain. Just by talking to friends and colleagues, or making a few phone calls and visits you increase your chances of finding the right fit and having a positive experience.

Reprinted with permission from the AAHSA website