

Financial Considerations of Independent and Assisted Living

As we advance in years, concerns about health, safety, and a lack of socialization can make a strong case for transitioning to independent or assisted living in a retirement community. Finances are typically an important consideration when deciding whether to make this move and, if so, in selecting a community.

In the United States, the majority of assisted living residents use some form of private pay to cover its costs. Seniors with insubstantial personal savings, or for whom long-term care insurance is not sufficient, should consult the resources available through MassHealth, Social Security, and other agencies that may be able to help to offset some of the fees.

When first thinking about relocation, breaking down the monthly expenses can make it easier to compare the real cost of living at home versus a senior living community.



Resident and artist Carol Olsen with one of her paintings.

Entrance fee

Retirement communities that offer a continuum of care often require a bulk upfront payment from new residents. Because the fee can be substantial, prospective residents should confirm its amount and purpose, as well as the community's refund policy. At New Horizons, the entrance fee is fully refundable to the resident or a designated beneficiary following the termination of the residency.

Base fee

The base monthly fee at many communities will include housing and meals. Probe beyond these generalities to determine exactly what is included, and what you will need to cover separately on your own. New Horizons' basic monthly fee includes three homemade meals daily, weekly housekeeping and linen service, local phone and basic cable, scheduled transportation, and access to a variety of outings, events, activities, and amenities such as an indoor swimming pool. It also offers daily Catholic Mass in an on-site chapel.

Living quarters

Consider the type of living quarters needed and the applicable residency fees. Will a cozy studio be enough space for you and the furniture you

would like to bring, or do you need a one- or two-bedroom suite? Keep in mind that seniors with mobility issues may need suites that are nearer to the entrance, which may be pricier than the base rate advertised.

Second occupant

It is standard practice for retirement communities to charge a second-occupant fee when more than one person will reside in an apartment. Seniors who are moving in pairs, or who plan to employ a live-in aide, should inquire about this fee so that they can incorporate it into their budget. New Horizons' second occupant is just \$100 per month.

Assistive services

The fee schedule for personal care services varies from community to community. Some adopt a pay-as-you-go methodology, with charges for individual services as needed, whereas others offer a package for a flat rate. Bear in mind that at-home care provider agencies typically impose a four-hour minimum, but so-called à la carte fee structures at assisted living communities sometimes allow for time increments as little as 15 minutes, offering increased flexibility and, potentially, cost savings.

Other factors many people will consider are the value gained from social opportunities and access to amenities and activities, the enhanced safety of living in a staffed community versus being home alone, and the reduction in reliance on family, friends, and neighbors.

Not-for-profit New Horizons is owned by the substantially endowed Cummings Foundation, which has a long history of supporting community-based organizations geared toward improving the quality of life of area residents. The Foundation effectively subsidizes each resident's fees every month by absorbing most cost-of-living and other operational increases on behalf of residents, meaning that, in some cases, residents are still paying the same basic monthly fee as they did in 1995.

To learn more about how residency at New Horizons might fit into your future, call **508-460-5200** or visit **www.countrycommunities.com**.



Residents Carol Bajor and Charlie Rogers (seated) and community service associate Jennifer Gonzalez Ribeiro (standing)