



Senior Care Terms Glossary

A

Accreditation: A seal of approval given by an autonomous governing body to a community or service provider. Some examples of accreditation bodies for the senior housing and care industry include CARF/CCAC (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Communities and Continuing Care Accreditation Commission) and JCAHO (Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations).

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs): Bathing, eating, grooming, dressing, toileting and other daily activities.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act): Passed by Congress in 1980, this law establishes a clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability.

Administrator: In most cases, an administrator is a licensed professional who undertakes the duty of managing the day-to-day operations of a care community, such as a nursing home or assisted living community.

Adult Day Care: Structured programs with stimulating social activities and health-related and rehabilitation services for seniors who are physically or emotionally disabled and need a protective environment. Participants are usually brought to the care community in the morning and leave in the evening.

Aging in Place: A concept that advocates allowing a resident to remain in his/her living environment, regardless of the physical or mental decline that may occur with aging.

Alzheimer's Care Center: A safe and controlled residential facility that specializes in providing care for those with Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's: The most common cause of dementia, Alzheimer's is a progressive, degenerative disease of the brain, characterized by loss of function and death of nerve cells in several brain areas, leading to loss of memory and learning.

Ambulatory: The ability to walk freely and independently. Not bedridden or hospitalized on a long-term basis.

Assessment: An evaluation, usually performed by a physician, of a person's mental, emotional and social capabilities.

Assisted Living: A special combination of housing, personalized supportive services and health care designed to meet the needs — both scheduled and unscheduled — of those who need help with daily activities. Services provided in assisted living residences usually include:

- Three meals a day served in a common dining area
- Housekeeping services
- Transportation
- Assistance with eating, bathing, dressing, toileting and walking
- Access to health and medical services
- 24-hour security and staff availability
- Emergency call systems for each resident's home
- Health promotion and exercise programs
- Medication reminders
- Personal laundry services
- Social and recreational activities

B

Board and Care Home: A small or mid-sized residential care home that offers meals, and includes some assistance with activities of daily living, but not skilled nursing. Rooms may be shared or private and depending upon licensing, a Board and Care Home might serve only seniors or people with disabilities or chronic psychiatric problems.

C

Caregiver: The primary person in charge of caring for an individual, usually a family member or a designated health care professional.

Case Management: A term used to describe formal services planned by health care professionals.

(Senior Care Glossary Continued)

Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC): A community that offers several kinds of residences, including independent living, assisted living and skilled nursing care. CCRCs usually provide a written agreement or long-term contract between the resident (frequently lasting the term of the resident's lifetime) and the community, which offers a continuum of housing, services and health care, commonly all on one campus or site.

Convalescent Home: See Nursing Home.

D

Dementia: The loss of intellectual functions (thinking, remembering, reasoning) of sufficient severity to interfere with a person's daily functioning. Dementia is not a disease itself, but rather a group of symptoms that may accompany certain diseases or conditions. Symptoms may also include changes in personality, mood and behavior. Dementia is irreversible when caused by disease or injury, but may be reversible when caused by drugs, alcohol, depression, or imbalances of hormones or vitamins.

Developmental Disability (DD): Affliction characterized by chronic physical and mental disabilities, which may include cerebral palsy, retardation, thyroid problems, seizures and quadriplegia.

Director of Nursing (DON): A DON oversees the nursing staff and is responsible for formulating nursing policies and monitoring the quality of care. The DON is also responsible for the community's compliance with federal and state nursing care regulations.

E

Elder Care: A broad term that describes senior care services such as assisted living, adult day care, nursing care, hospice, and in-home care.

F

Financial Counseling Programs: Programs that provide seniors with help managing their finances and completing Medicare, Medicaid or insurance forms.

G

Gerontology: The scientific study of the biological, psychological and social effects of aging.

Geriatric Care Manager: A health and human services professional trained to help families with the sourcing and management of care for their older relatives.

H

HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996): This law outlines the requirements a long-term care insurance policy must follow in order that paid premiums be deducted as medical expenses and unpaid benefits be considered taxable income. This act also has stipulations regarding privacy of medical information.

HMO: A Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) is an organized system for providing comprehensive health care in a specific geographic area to a voluntarily enrolled group of members.

Home Health Care: Provision of medical and nursing services in the individual's home by a licensed provider. Medicare can cover this care, if it meets certain guidelines regarding a recent hospital stay.

Hospice Care: Philosophy and approach to providing comfort and care at life's end. It can include medical, counseling and social services, and is provided in-home, in specialized hospitals or hospice care centers.

I

Independent Living: A residential living setting for seniors who require minimal or no extra assistance, this independent lifestyle may or may not provide hospitality or supportive services.

L

Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN): LPNs are trained to administer technical nursing procedures, as well as provide a range of health care services, such as administration of medication and changing of dressings.

Living Will: This is a written document stating, in advance, an individual's wishes concerning the use of life-saving devices and procedures in the event of terminal illness or injury, should the individual no longer be competent.

Long-Term Care: Care given in the form of medical and support services to people who, due to illness or injury, have lost some or all of their capacity to function without assistance.

Long-term Care Insurance: This insurance pays for a succession of caregiving services administered by a nurse or aide to the chronically ill and provided in a community or the individual's home.

(Senior Care Glossary Continued)

M

Managed Care: The basic goal of managed care — a partnership between an insurance provider and a health care system — is to coordinate all care services received in order to maximize benefits and minimize costs. Managed care plans use their own network of health care providers and require approvals prior to receiving services.

Medicaid: Funded through the state to individuals unable to pay for health care, Medicaid can be accessed only when all prior assets and funds are depleted. Income eligibility criteria must be met to qualify for Medicaid, which accounts for about 52 percent of the nation's care costs. Medicaid is the source of payment for almost 70 percent of residents of skilled nursing communities.

Medicare: A federal health insurance program for those 65 and older, as well as individuals with disabilities. The Social Security Administration, regardless of the individual's income, administers Medicare. It also provides for hospital and skilled nursing care (called Medicare Part A) and physician services, therapies and home health care (called Medicare Part B).

Medical Director: A staff medical director assumes overall responsibility for the formulation and implementation of all policies related to medical care provided by the community. This person ensures the community delivers the prescribed care by coordinating care services with residents' personal physicians. In some instances, the medical director may be a resident's primary physician.

Medication Management/Medication Administration: In an assisted living setting, this is a formalized procedure for the management of self-administered medicine, and may include written rules regarding timing, dosage and coordination with a resident's personal physician. Residents must take the medication themselves — the community can remind a resident, but cannot actually administer an injection or oral medication.

Medigap Insurance: Private health insurance used to pay costs not covered by Medicare, such as deductibles and co-insurance.

Memory Care: Many independent and assisted living communities include specialized areas dedicated to caring for patients needing memory care for dementia, Alzheimer's or other cognitive impairments. Usually services and amenities are on site, with group activities and events included.

N

Non-Ambulatory: Inability to walk independently. Usually bedridden or hospitalized.

Not-for-Profit: Status of ownership and/or operation characterized by a governing body of a community-based board of trustees, who are all volunteers. Board members donate their time and talents to ensure that a not-for-profit organization's approach to caring for older people responds to local needs. In a not-for-profit, surplus income is reinvested into the community to improve or expand services for the residents.

Nurse Assistant: Nurse assistants work under the supervision of a Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse. A nurse assistant provides the most personal care to residents, including bathing, dressing and toileting. They must be trained, tested and certified to provide care in nursing communities that participate in Medicare and Medicaid.

Nursing Home: Provides 24-hour skilled care for residents who generally rely on assistance for most or all daily activities (such as bathing, dressing and toileting). One step below hospital acute care, state-licensed nursing homes are mandated to make regular medical supervision and rehabilitation therapy available, and are eligible to participate in the Medicaid program. See also Skilled Nursing Community.

O

Occupational Therapy: Occupational therapy is generally administered by a licensed therapist to help individuals relearn activities of daily living, thereby promoting recovery or rehabilitation.

P

Palliative Care: The medical specialty that focuses on the relief of the pain, stress and other debilitating symptoms of serious illness, palliative care is often delivered at the same time as treatment meant to cure you. The goal is to relieve suffering and provide the best possible quality of life for patients and their families. It may include a treatment plan customized for each patient. Palliative care relieves symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, constipation, nausea, loss of appetite and difficulty sleeping.

Physical Therapy: This is the treatment of disease or injury by physical and mechanical means (as massage, regulated exercise, water, light, heat and electricity). Physical therapists plan and administer prescribed physical therapy treatments for patients to help restore their function and strength.

(Senior Care Glossary Continued)

R

Registered Nurse (RN): Graduate-trained nurse who has both passed a state board examination and is licensed by a state agency to practice nursing. A minimum of two years of college is required in addition to passage of the state exams. The RN plans for resident care by assessing resident needs, developing and monitoring care plans in conjunction with physicians, as well as executing highly technical, skilled nursing treatments.

Rehabilitation: Therapeutic care for individuals requiring intensive physical, occupational or speech therapy, provided to restore them to a former capacity.

Residential Care: See Assisted Living.

Respite Care: Services that provide caregivers with temporary relief from tasks associated with caregiving (e.g., in-home assistance, short nursing home stays, adult day care).

S

Skilled Nursing Community: Designed for individuals who require full-time care, or assistance with most, if not all, activities of daily living. Skilled nursing communities are licensed and offer medical care by trained medical staff, such as a registered nurse or therapist, 24 hours a day. They may also include rehabilitation services, memory support services and other types of specialized care. They are typically Medicare/Medicaid-certified and monthly fees include meals, personal assistance and most medical services (except for medications).

Support Group: Facilitated gathering of caregivers, family, friends or others affected by a disease or condition for the purpose of discussing issues related to the disease.

T

Transfer: To move a resident from one place to another — from the bed to a wheelchair, or from assisted living to skilled care.

Transitional Care: This type of care is designed for those who are being discharged from an acute care situation, such as a hospital stay, but are not quite ready to return to their home. Short-term in nature, this care may be specialized for specific conditions and also includes rehabilitative services.

Transportation Services: A way to transport residents to shopping, doctors and events.

V

Ventilator: Also called a respirator, this is a medical device which breathes for a person who is unable to do so on their own.

W

Weaning: A step-by-step process of decreasing a patient's dependence on a ventilator until their ability to breathe independently is restored and the ventilator is no longer needed.

