

What to Ask When You Tour a Senior Living Community

30 Questions Worth Considering Before you Decide



A Family Guide from

VANTAGE POINT
RETIREMENT LIVING, INC.

How to Tour *Like an Expert*

A tour is the single **most useful step** in the senior living decision process. It answers questions no brochure, website, or review can about the staff, the engagement of residents, the culture of the community, and whether this place could genuinely **feel like home**.

The **questions you ask** on a tour help determine what you learn. Walking through beautiful common spaces and meeting a friendly member of the community team aren't enough to show you the full picture of what life in the community looks like. The questions below are designed to cut through the surface and get to what actually matters.

We've created this guide to help steer your conversation as you tour any community. Bring it with you, take notes in the margin, and ask every question on the list — not just the ones that seem most urgent at the moment. The answers you get, and the way they are given, will tell you a great deal.

Before You Walk In: *Two Things to Notice First*

The first thirty seconds inside a community are worth paying attention to — not as a final judgment, but as a first data point. You can feel when a community is welcoming, vibrant, and engaging the moment you cross the threshold.

Two specific things to observe before your tour officially begins:

What are the residents doing?

Are they engaged, interacting, moving through common spaces with purpose? Or are they isolated, sedentary, or largely absent from shared areas? This single observation tells you a lot about the community, far more than any question you may ask.

How does the staff interact with residents they pass?

Do staff members make eye contact with residents? Do they greet them by name? Stop to ask how they are doing? Or do they move through spaces looking at clipboards and screens? The quality of those incidental interactions is the most reliable indicator of community culture.



Staffing Questions

The **quality** of a community's care is only as good as **the people delivering it**. These questions can help you get a picture of the team who will be relating to your loved one day in and day out.



1 What is the staff-to-resident ratio during the day, in the evening, and overnight?

Why it matters: Care quality doesn't stop at 5pm. A community that staffs well during tours but thins out overnight is telling you something important about its priorities.

2 What is the staff turnover rate, and how long have most direct care team members been here?

Why it matters: High turnover is one of the strongest predictors of inconsistent care. Tenured staff know residents' preferences, routines, and their history in ways that new hires cannot.

3 What specific training do staff receive beyond the initial onboarding — and how often?

Why it matters: Licensing sets a floor, not a ceiling. Communities that invest in ongoing training, including dementia-specific and behavioral health training, are demonstrating a genuine commitment to quality.

Did you know? All of the team members in Vantage Point's Compass Memory Care™ communities receive Alzheimer's Association-backed training above and beyond what is 'required' to ensure your loved one is cared for consistently and compassionately no matter where they are in the community.

4 Who is the director of nursing or clinical lead, and what are their hours of in-building presence?

Why it matters: A community with strong clinical leadership on-site throughout the day manages health changes proactively rather than reactively.

5 How are family members notified when something changes — a health event, a behavioral shift, a fall?

Why it matters: The answer tells you how the community views its relationship with families: as partners in care, or as background characters in their residents' lives.



Care Quality

Understanding how care is delivered and adapts is the heart of evaluating any senior living community. These questions reveal whether the community treats residents as individuals or as an apartment number.

1 Can you walk me through what a care assessment looks like, and how it translates into a daily care plan?

Why it matters: A community with a thoughtful assessment process will give you a specific, detailed answer. Vague responses suggest the care plan may be generic rather than individualized.

2 How frequently are care plans reviewed and updated as a resident's needs change?

Why it matters: A care plan written on move-in day that is never revisited is not a care plan, it is documentation. Care should evolve with the person.

3 What is your process when a resident shows signs of cognitive or physical decline that may require a higher level of care?

Why it matters: The honest answer tells you whether the community's instinct is to support residents through transitions or to discharge them when things get harder.

4 Can residents remain here if their care needs increase significantly, or would they need to move?

Why it matters: Continuity of care — the ability to age in place within a single community — is one of the most important quality-of-life factors in senior living. Knowing the ceiling matters.

5 How is medication management handled, and what oversight exists to prevent errors?

Why it matters: Medication errors are among the most common and consequential safety issues in senior care. A community with clear protocols and double-check systems is managing this seriously.

6 What is the emergency response protocol, and what is the typical response time when a resident needs urgent help?

Why it matters: Ask this specifically, not generally. A community with a clear, practiced protocol will give you a precise answer.



Did you know? At Vantage Point communities, care doesn't stop at our front door. We coordinate directly with physicians, therapists, and outside specialists, and residents are always welcome to bring in their own care providers. Your loved one's existing relationships with their healthcare team don't have to end when they move in.

Dining

Meals are not incidental to senior living, they are one of the defining social experiences of daily life. These questions tell you whether the dining program is simply adequate, or something worth looking forward to.

1 Can I see this week's menu, and is it possible to have a meal here today?

Why it matters: There is no better way to evaluate a dining program than to experience it. A community confident in its food will welcome the request; one that hedges should prompt follow-up questions.

2 How are individual dietary needs, preferences, and cultural considerations accommodated?

Why it matters: The answer reveals how much the culinary team treats residents as individuals. 'We have a heart-healthy option' is a very different answer than 'we work with residents to understand their preferences and restrictions.'

3 What happens if a resident consistently doesn't enjoy the food? What alternatives are available?

Why it matters: Knowing there is a real feedback mechanism tells you that the dining program is managed responsively rather than rigidly.

4 Are mealtimes flexible, or are there fixed seating windows that residents must adhere to?

Why it matters: Autonomy over something as basic as when to eat matters enormously to quality of life. Rigid mealtimes with no flexibility are worth noting.

5 Who leads the culinary team, and how are menus developed?

Why it matters: Communities that develop their own menus with local ingredients and seasonal variation are investing in dining as a genuine experience. A standardized corporate menu, applied across many locations, typically produces more consistent but less distinctive results.

Did you know? At all of our Vantage Point communities, every meal is chef-prepared in-house with fresh & locally sourced ingredients. Menus change seasonally and great care is taken to listen to what residents actually want to eat.



Activities & Programs

Great programming is the difference between a community that residents endure and one they genuinely enjoy. These questions help you assess whether the activity calendar is built around residents' real interests or assembled to look full.

1 Can I see the activity calendar for the past month?

Why it matters: A single calendar can be assembled for impression. A month of consistent, varied programming reflects the real culture of the community.

2 How are activities tailored to individual residents' interests and abilities, rather than offered generically?

Why it matters: The best communities engage residents regularly and adjust programming to match who is actually living there. Generic programming is not inherently bad, but should not be the whole picture.

3 What does the fitness and physical wellness programming look like, and who leads it?

Why it matters: Physical movement has an immeasurable impact on cognitive health, mood, and longevity. A community with genuine fitness focus and programming is investing in outcomes, not optics.

4 How does the community support residents in maintaining connections outside the building with family, friends, and the broader community?

Why it matters: Isolation is one of the most significant health risks in older adulthood. A community with regular outings, easy visitor access, and strong family engagement policies is treating social connection as a health priority.



Did you know? At Vantage Point, robust programming isn't reserved for the most independent residents — full social and activity calendars are a feature of every level of care, at every community. Residents don't just participate in activities; they shape them. From Bible studies to boozy bingo, clubs and programs are driven by the people who actually live in the communities.



Community Culture

Culture is the hardest thing to assess from a brochure — and the most important thing to get right. These questions give you direct access to the texture of daily life.

1 Can I speak with some current residents?

Why it matters: Residents who are happy will tell you. A community confident in its culture will grant this request without hesitation.

2 How would you describe the community's philosophy of care in one or two sentences? Can you give me an example of what that looks like in practice?

Why it matters: A gap between the stated philosophy and the specific example is telling. If the answer stays at the level of abstraction ('we treat residents like family'), push for the concrete illustration.

3 How are resident concerns or complaints formally handled? What is the process, and what is the typical timeline for a response?

Why it matters: Every community will say they take concerns seriously. The ones that actually do will give you a specific process with named roles and timelines.

4 What is the leadership team's tenure, and what is the history of this community under its current ownership and management?

Why it matters: Community culture is shaped by leadership stability. High administrative turnover is a meaningful quality signal.



Environment & Safety

The physical environment should support independence, reduce fall risk, and allow for aging in place – with dignity. These questions move beyond aesthetics to what the space actually does for residents.

1 What safety systems are in place throughout the community, such as call systems, fall detection, or environmental monitoring?

Why it matters: The answer reveals whether safety is approached proactively (monitored systems that detect changes before emergencies occur) or reactively (emergency pull cords that depend on a resident being able to reach them).

2 What is the visitor policy – hours of access, overnight accommodations for family, private space for visits?

Why it matters: Restrictions on family access are worth understanding before committing. A community that limits visiting hours significantly is managing its own operations, not your loved one's relationships.

3 How does the community manage infectious illness? What protocols are in place for isolation, notification, and community-wide prevention?

Why it matters: The question is relevant year-round, not just during acute outbreaks. A community with clear, rehearsed protocols for managing illness is operating at a higher standard than one that figures it out as it goes.



Finances

Costs in senior living are rarely as simple as a monthly number. These questions help you understand the full financial picture — and reveal whether a community is committed to transparency or managing what you know.

1 What is exactly included in the base monthly fee, and what is typically billed as an additional care charge as needs increase?

Why it matters: *The difference between an all-inclusive fee and a base-plus-care model can be significant over time. Understand precisely where the base rate ends and variable charges begin.*

2 What has been the history of rate increases over the past three to five years, and how much notice do residents receive before an increase takes effect?

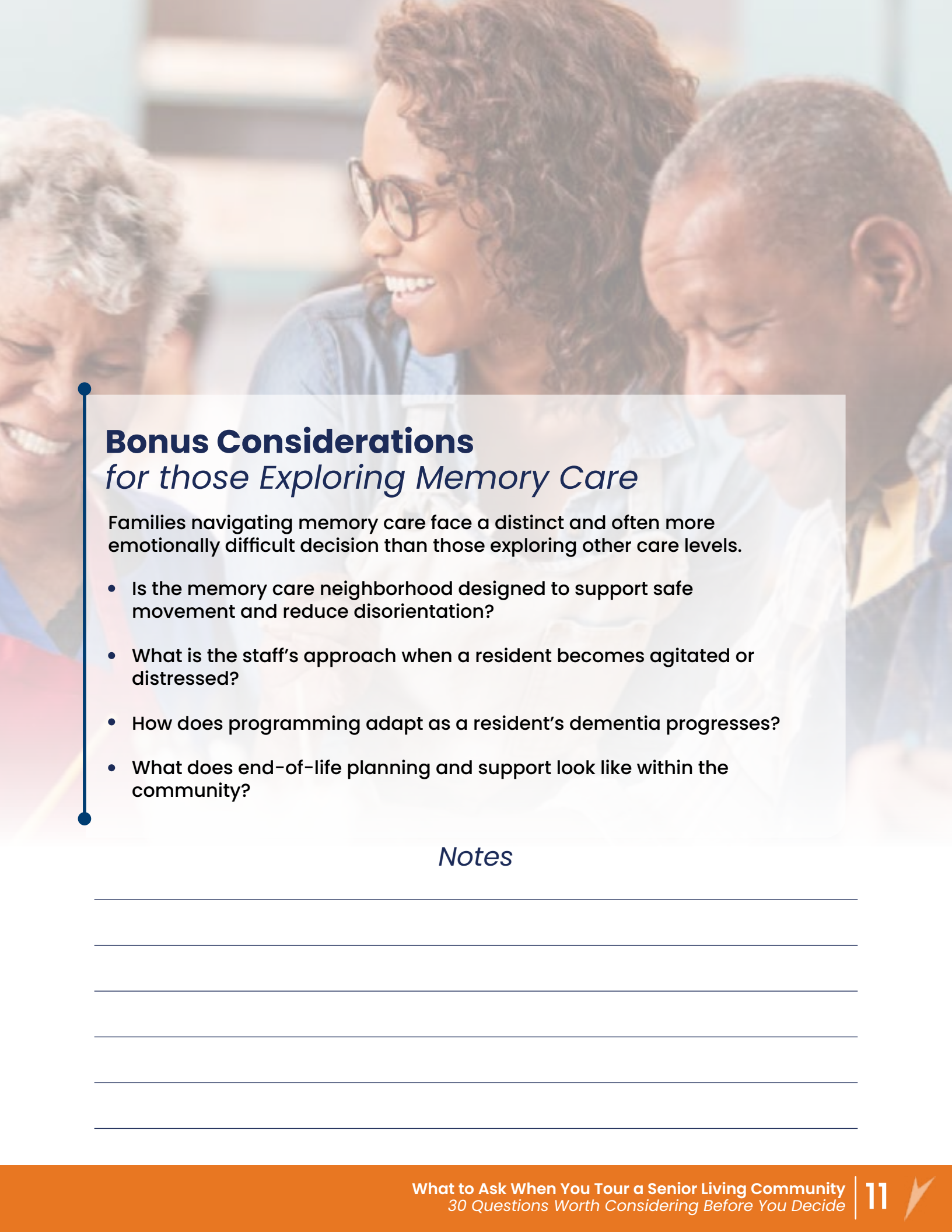
Why it matters: *Communities that have raised rates consistently at or below inflation and communicate increases with adequate notice are operating with financial integrity. Large, infrequent, or poorly communicated increases are worth noting.*

3 If a resident's financial resources are depleted, what is the community's policy? Is Medicaid accepted, and under what conditions?

Why it matters: *The honest answer to this question protects families from one of the most difficult situations in senior care: a forced move driven by financial exhaustion. A community with a clear, compassionate policy on this is managing for the long term.*



Did you know? Vantage Point communities operate on a straightforward monthly rental model — no six- or seven-figure entrance fees, no complex buy-in structures. One community fee, in line with your monthly rent, and you're set. It's a model designed to give families financial clarity from day one.



Bonus Considerations *for those Exploring Memory Care*

Families navigating memory care face a distinct and often more emotionally difficult decision than those exploring other care levels.

- Is the memory care neighborhood designed to support safe movement and reduce disorientation?
- What is the staff's approach when a resident becomes agitated or distressed?
- How does programming adapt as a resident's dementia progresses?
- What does end-of-life planning and support look like within the community?

Notes



After the Tour:

What to Do with What You Learned

1 Write Down Your Impressions Immediately

Before consulting your notes, before talking to family, write down your gut response to the community. What felt right? What felt off? What surprised you — in either direction? First impressions are not infallible, but they are meaningful. Give them their due before the more analytical work begins.

2 Score the Answers, Not Just the Aesthetics

Beautiful lobbies and well-appointed dining rooms are easy to be swayed by. Resist the temptation to use them as proxies for quality. Go back through your notes and score each category based on the substance of what you were told:

- Were the staffing answers specific and confident, or general and evasive?
- Did the care quality responses reflect a philosophy of individualized support, or a standardized program?
- Was the financial transparency conversation open and detailed, or did it feel like the community was managing what you knew?
- Were there any questions the tour guide deflected, avoided, or answered with noticeably less specificity than others?

3 Compare Communities on What Matters, *Not What Shows*

When comparing two or three communities, hold each to the same standard. Rate them on the categories that matter most to your situation — staffing if continuity of care is a priority, financial transparency if long-term planning is uncertain, community culture if social connection is the primary driver. A community with a more modest physical plant that scores higher on staff tenure and care quality is almost always the better choice.

4 Follow Up Promptly

The way a community responds to your follow-up questions is itself a data point. A community that responds quickly, thoroughly, and without defensiveness is giving you a preview of how it will respond when you are a resident. One that is slow, vague, or dismissive is also giving you a preview.

If questions arose after you left, like on the drive home, in conversation with family, or on reflection, send them. Every community you are seriously considering should be able to answer your follow-up questions within two business days.

A community that genuinely welcomes this level of scrutiny is a community that is confident in what it offers. The quality of how your questions are answered is as important as the content of the answers.



A Word on Red Flags

Most communities you visit will be run by well-intentioned people doing their best. But the following responses — or non-responses — during a tour are worth taking seriously as warning signs:

Vague or deflected staffing answers.

If a tour guide cannot tell you the staff-to-resident ratio or turns the question into a general statement about 'always having enough staff,' a non-answer can tell you all you need to know. If the person giving your tour isn't positive, they should be willing to help you get an answer.

No opportunity to connect with current residents or families.

Confident communities will facilitate opportunities for prospective residents and families to connect with people who already live there. That could mean a conversation with a current resident, a chat with a family member, or a guided introduction during the tour. The format may vary depending on the level of care, but what matters is the willingness. A community that makes no effort to offer any such connection, or that deflects every request to speak with someone who already lives there, is managing what you learn.

Glossy answers to financial questions.

If every financial question is answered in terms of value and experience rather than specific costs, timelines, and historical rate data, you are being sold to rather than informed.

An activity calendar that does not match the energy in the building.

If the calendar looks full but the common spaces are quiet and residents appear unstimulated, the programming exists on paper rather than in practice.

High administrative turnover.

Ask how long the executive director has been in the role. Ask about the previous director. Leadership instability at the top consistently cascades into care quality and staff culture.

Pressure to decide quickly.

There is an important difference between a community that shares genuine, relevant information about availability, and one that uses pressure to cut short the decision-making process. Good communities will follow up, advocate for themselves, and work to earn your business. That is appropriate. What is not appropriate is urgency designed to prevent your family from comparing options, asking more questions, or taking the time to feel confident. If you are being pushed to decide before you have the information you need, that could be a meaningful signal about how the community will operate once you are a resident.

Scorecard & Notes

Category	Community 1	Community 2	Community 3
Before You Walk In			
Staffing Questions			
Care Quality			
Dining			
Activities & Programs			
Community Culture			
Environment & Safety			
Finances			
Total			

You deserve to feel certain.

Vantage Point Retirement Living communities across Delaware and Pennsylvania welcome every question on this list, and the follow-up questions that come after. We believe that a family who has done their research and chosen us thoughtfully is a better partner in a resident's care than one who arrived by default.



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