To help a parent choose a senior retirement community:

- Talk with your parents about their preferences regarding retirement community options and the lifestyle they'd most enjoy.
- Tour senior living retirement communities and speak with a Senior Living Specialist together to fully understand all options, amenities and programs available.
- Address possible needs to come that may affect their choices, such as continuum of care facilities, on-site health care professionals, 24-hour emergency services, etc.
- Complete a "Compare the Value" worksheet to make sure a retirement community makes financial sense.

Innovative Approaches to Care

Caregivers will find a variety of local care options for loved ones. Typically good dementia care incorporates an assessment of a person's abilities, strategies for addressing behavioral and communication changes, appropriate staffing patterns, care planning and provision and an assisted living or nursing home environment that cultivates community.

When evaluating the range of existing offerings, ask about new care models that may combine a therapeutically designed living environment with a person-centered approach. This innovative model may appeal to those whose family member or friend values individuality and autonomy within secure and structured surroundings.

Additionally, it's important to look for trained and caring staff who provide physical care and clinical services with an emphasis on social and emotional support for their residents and families at all stages, including end of life care.

A number of qualified communities have created home-like environments which offer the positive attributes often associated with home while allowing for a diverse set of daily activities and life celebrations that families and residents may enjoy together. From educational fireside chats to Alzheimer's Support Groups, a host of senior living communities today have embraced the community at large in providing expanded opportunities for residents, families and neighbors.

While weighing retirement lifestyle alternatives for loved ones, it may be helpful for caregivers to find a local support group. Coping tips, a list of community resources and a confidential forum for discussion may be enormously encouraging to the caregiver. Identifying the best care possible for your loved one as quickly as possible will ensure that the entire family remains whole, healthy and happy.