

Orange County Assisted Living Evaluation Checklist

A practical worksheet for comparing assisted living communities in Orange County

How to use this checklist

Use the same checklist for every community you seriously consider. Consistent criteria make it easier to compare communities honestly instead of relying on impressions from tours that happened weeks apart. This is a structured evaluation tool, not a scoring system. Use it alongside guidance from physicians, licensed senior living professionals, elder care consultants and legal or financial professionals as appropriate.

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Community and Tour Details

Community name: _____	Tour date: _____
Address / city: _____	Primary contact: _____
Phone / email: _____	License number: _____
Licensed capacity: _____	Current monthly base rate: _____
Care level quoted: _____	Follow-up date: _____

RCFE Licensing Verification

- Verified current RCFE license status and licensed capacity through the CDSS Community Care Licensing facility search
- Reviewed available inspection reports and checked for Type A or Type B deficiencies
- Asked about any citations in the past two years and how they were resolved
- If hospice support may be needed, confirmed whether the community has an appropriate hospice waiver and how care is coordinated with licensed hospice providers
- If the community advertises memory care or dementia special care, asked what licensing, staff training and environmental requirements support that claim
- Asked how the community has implemented the 2025 Title 22 updates
- Confirmed the administrator holds a current California RCFE administrator certificate

Notes / follow-up questions:

Care Needs and Staffing

- Asked how staffing is structured during days, evenings, overnights and weekends
- Asked how staffing changes when resident needs increase
- Understood how care plans are developed, reviewed and updated
- Confirmed the community can meet current and anticipated future care needs
- Asked about staff continuity and caregiver assignments
- Confirmed required staff and personnel have completed California DOJ LiveScan background checks as applicable
- Understood how medication assistance is handled and documented

Notes / follow-up questions:

Safety and Emergency Preparedness

- Observed fall prevention features: lighting, flooring, grab bars, call systems
- Asked how the community documents falls, notifies families and determines when a physician or licensing agency must be contacted
- Confirmed current Emergency Disaster Plan is on file
- Asked about wildfire and earthquake evacuation protocols specific to the location
- Asked how the community manages power outages, including lighting, refrigeration, communications and resident safety

Notes / follow-up questions:

Memory Care Considerations

- Confirmed whether dementia care needs can be supported in place as they evolve, and what the distinction is between dementia and mild cognitive impairment in terms of care
- Asked about staff dementia training and behavioral care planning practices
- Asked how behavioral expressions are addressed using person-centered, nonpharmacologic approaches and how medication decisions are coordinated with licensed medical professionals
- Understood the process for reassessment as cognitive needs increase
- Confirmed access to secure outdoor spaces where relevant

Notes / follow-up questions:

Meals, Activities and Daily Life

- Reviewed the menu and asked how meals are prepared, how often menus change and how dietary needs are accommodated
- Reviewed the activities calendar and asked how programming matches individual interests
- Observed resident engagement in common areas during the visit
- Confirmed outdoor access and how it is used
- Asked about room personalization and personal belongings

Notes / follow-up questions:

Family Communication

- Confirmed notification process for health changes, falls and incidents
- Identified the primary family contact and typical response time
- Asked about visiting hours and the ability to return at different times of day or on weekends
- Understood how to participate in care plan reviews
- Confirmed communication options for geographically distant family members

Notes / follow-up questions:

Costs and Contract

- Reviewed the admission agreement, written fee schedule and rate-change policies
- Confirmed what is included in the base rate versus billed separately
- Asked about care level adjustment pricing and the history of annual rate increases
- Understood the deposit, refund and discharge provisions
- Confirmed long-term care insurance acceptance and billing process

Notes / follow-up questions:

Tour Observations

- Asked how long the administrator or director has been in their current role
- Noted cleanliness, smell, noise level and resident activity on arrival
- Observed staff-resident interactions in unscripted moments
- Reviewed a resident room and the dining area
- Assessed outdoor spaces for safety, maintenance and actual resident use
- Asked whether you can return at a different time of day or on a weekend
- Asked whether the community can connect you, with permission, to a current resident's family member as a reference

Notes / follow-up questions:

Community Comparison Snapshot

Use this page after the tour to capture your clearest impressions before comparing communities side by side.

Strongest positives:

Biggest concerns:

Questions that still need answers:

Documents to request or review:

People to consult before deciding:

Likely next step:

Using this checklist

Complete the same checklist for every community you seriously consider. Differences in how communities answer the same questions are often as informative as the answers themselves. This checklist is a tool for structured evaluation, not a scoring system.

Important Disclaimer

This checklist is provided for general informational and organizational purposes only. It is not medical, legal, financial, clinical, regulatory, emergency or other professional advice.

It should not replace a personalized care plan, a physician evaluation, licensed professional guidance, legal or financial advice, facility-specific documentation or emergency services. Assisted living needs, care options, costs, safety risks, licensing requirements and family circumstances vary by individual, community and time.

Families should verify current licensing information, facility records, inspection history and regulatory requirements directly through the California Department of Social Services before making a decision. Contracts, fee schedules, care levels, staffing practices and provider policies can vary and may change over time.

For sudden confusion, chest pain, serious injury, suspected stroke symptoms, suicidal statements or immediate danger, call 911 or seek urgent medical care. For concerns about cognitive decline, fall risk, medication safety, elder financial exploitation, abuse, care placement, licensing or contracts, speak with a qualified healthcare professional, licensed care provider, appropriate agency, attorney or financial professional.

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Raya's Paradise is a licensed senior living community in San Clemente, CA, serving Orange County families with assisted living, memory care, respite care and hospice support. Boutique coastal care with more than 30 years of experience behind it.

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