



Safety and Security has taken on new meaning in the world of senior living. And, it should.

But, it shouldn't stop you from considering or making a move. Well-run senior living organizations are physically and programmatically designed to create a supportive, safe environment that helps residents age better for longer, especially during challenging times. By knowing what questions to ask, and the markers of a senior living provider with strong processes and procedures for resident safety, you can feel confident knowing that you're making the right decision for now and well into the future.

Understanding the term safe and sound

For seniors, families, and providers, safety and wellbeing is priority number one, and questions surrounding safety and security at senior living communities have always been in the spotlight. With COVID-19, they have broadened to cover infection-control protocols, hygiene, and sanitation. Today, more than ever, it is important to ask "am I safer?" living alone at home or in a group environment of healthy nutrition, social interaction, and constant vigilance of protection. When you or your loved one come to a senior living community, you expect safety, you assume security, but you *need* peace of mind.

It is no longer enough to know that you or your loved one will be supported in a community that is actively working to create a safe, secure, and caring environment. COVID-19 brought about significant media coverage on nursing home outbreaks, causing many to be wary of senior living settings.

But they are not the same type of setting, and across the industry, rates of COVID infection among residents living independently at retirement communities has been quite low. Of the approximately 4,000 tests performed across the Asbury system of eight retirement communities as of early July, just 1.6% have presented positive cases. Asbury continually monitors and follows recommendations coming from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and state and local health officials.

98% of all seniors and their families are nervous about senior living communities, citing the pandemic as their primary fear. The truth is that senior living is safer than you think.

Addressing Covid-19 Safety Protocols

At Asbury Communities, the safety and well-being of residents have always been their highest priority. When COVID-19 first appeared on the East Coast in late February, the organization was ready to meet it head on thanks to an infection-control algorithm that was developed by its Clinical Excellence team a year earlier and implemented across its system.



“I have never felt safer. Living here I have no fear. If I were in my house, I would have been totally isolated. Totally scared to go out of my house. Here we have our meals, groceries, and mail delivered right to our door.”

~Barbara Harbison
Resident at Asbury

Asbury's leadership team immediately established a COVID-19 Incident Command Center that worked with local administrative and clinical leadership to implement prevention and response measures in alignment with the latest federal, state, local and public health regulations and expertise. The measures implemented remain in place today and continue to evolve. Asbury is committed to proceeding cautiously with re-opening plans and to keep resident and associate safety as the highest priority. Across all levels of living at their retirement communities, residents and associates are practicing physical distance protocols, hand hygiene, and wearing masks. Robust contact tracing is also in place.

“We have heightened and increased cleaning and surface sanitation practices in high traffic, high touch places, and we have put in place screening measures for associates and vendors, and for residents who have left the community on an errand or visit and are returning,” explains Sue DaCamara, Chief Operating Officer for Asbury Communities. “In accordance with our infection-control protocols, associates and caregivers are donning appropriate personal protective equipment.”

Community teams are using a peroxide disinfectant that has a 3-minute dwell time, which is the amount of time that a sanitizer or disinfectant must be in contact with the surface, and remain wet, in order to achieve the product's advertised pathogen removal rate. Hand sanitizing stations can be found throughout community buildings and at entrances. In addition, Asbury communities have access to ultraviolet light technology as an additional disinfectant strategy.

Regular education on COVID-transmission prevention practices and services that encourage physical distancing – including contact-free delivery of meals and necessities and groceries – is now as much a standard at Asbury as the health and wellness protocols that have always been in place.

“Asbury is fully committed to transparency in our COVID response and status across our system,” adds DaCamara. “We continue to make available a wealth of information at our COVID Communications Hub on Asbury.org. This is not just about making information available because the CDC requires it. We have a responsibility to our stakeholders.”

Having responded quickly to the pandemic, Asbury Communities plans on maintaining vigilance for the foreseeable future, Senior Vice President of Health Care Services and Operations Henry Moehring told [Senior Housing News](#). Asbury responded quickly to the pandemic and adapted its communicable disease outbreak guidelines for isolating residents who test positive and instituting additional protocols for securing entry points, community areas and shared amenities. Asbury immediately and aggressively communicated the importance of physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, face covering, and staying at home to its residents and associates. “Our vigilance is still very strong and needs to be strong,” Moehring said. As testing materials became more available in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Tennessee where Asbury operates, Asbury moved quickly to conduct universal testing of residents and associates of its assisted living and nursing neighborhoods.



Considering a move now may be the perfect solution to safety and security concerns

12.5 million older adults live by themselves and experience a feeling of loneliness, putting them at a 29% higher risk for heart disease and 34% higher risk of stroke, increasing their risk for falls and cognitive decline.

While Covid-19 continues to be the chief topic at hand, focusing solely on that hides the very real and important benefits that community living brings – and even more so now. Foremost, being in a group setting surrounded by a team of professionals working to keep you safe, secure, and healthy adds up to major benefits. From ensuring all entrances are secure to following strict protocols for cleanliness; professional chefs ensuring balanced, healthy dining options delivered to your residence; and customized wellness programs addressing cognitive, social, and physical wellbeing, community living has so much to offer. Recent research attests to the importance of being in a group versus alone, particularly during the Covid-19 crisis and shelter-in-place mandates. At Asbury, associates are working hard to continue creating opportunities for engagement online and, safely, in person. Residents check in on their friends and neighbors or stop for a quick chat at the mailbox. And, as stay-at-home measures have eased, they are meeting friends for a walk or a visit on the patio, continuing outdoor activities like gardening, and attending community clubs and events that have moved online.

Research shows that isolation can cause feelings of distress and loneliness, which in turn can lead to physical and cognitive declines and depression. An increase in the stress hormone cortisol causes physiological changes that can impact behavior, depression, and appetite. Considering the wellness focus and support and enhanced safety measures that come with community living, an Asbury community provides more opportunity for secure, social living.

5 key questions when looking for a new senior living community

Accessibility to information and frequent communication to residents and their families are important factors to consider in making your next move. Asking the right questions will help you get the information you need to make an informed decision about moving to a retirement community. The top five questions on safety and security to ask when searching for the right senior living community include:

1. Is the entrance secure and how are visitors monitored?

As Asbury's COVID-19 prevention and response measures remain in place, visitors, essential vendors, and returning residents enter the campus through a central screening station where they follow the latest CDC screening guidelines, including a temperature check.

2. How and when are residents and families informed about situations that occur?

Asbury uses a variety of communication channels to provide specific, incident-related and regular updates, including email and e-newsletters, print notices, and Facebook.

3. How are high touch, high traffic areas kept cleaned and physical distancing enforced?

Cleanliness has always been a priority at Asbury communities, with dedicated maintenance and housekeeping departments ensuring that common areas are kept in good repair and regularly sanitized. They have enhanced cleaning protocols and time-frames, and continue to monitor the effectiveness of our cleaning products for infection-control. Hand sanitizer stations are available throughout campus common areas, as well as signage addressing infection-control, physical distancing, and mask requirements.

4. Are there grocery, pharmacy, meal delivery and on-campus health and support services?

Because Asbury communities offer a healthcare continuum, residents can receive assisted living, nursing, post-acute rehab care and other health services right on campus. Amenities such as eat-in and carryout dining, concierge assistance, and banking are also included. In response to COVID-19, dining has moved to contact-free delivery, free of charge, and groceries have been made available for purchase through their partner Sodexo. During state stay-at-home mandates, associates delivered online orders and other supplies to residents' homes.

5. Is there a back-up generator in the case of bad weather?

Asbury is proud to have the support of Sodexo, a global partner in dining and facilities management solutions. All of their communities have back-up generators which are regularly maintained and tested, and robust emergency response plans.

Want to learn more about life at Asbury Solomons? Call today to speak with a counselor, take a personal video tour, or schedule time to speak with a resident of our community.

Learn more at [AsburySolomons.org](https://www.asburysolomons.org)

Sources:

[U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[Next Avenue Blog](#)

[Where You Live Matters](#)

[Senior Housing News](#)

[Argentum](#)

[Mather Institute on Aging](#)

[ABC News](#)