



# Senior Living Licensure and Inspection Reports: Why They Matter and How to Use Them

Factors like location, pricing, care services, and amenities typically help guide the search for senior living. Yet, determining the overall quality and safety of prospective communities often involves other factors. This guide explains how state licensure and inspection reports can offer deeper insight into a community's performance, helping you make more informed choices.

## The importance of state licensure

[Assisted living](#) and [memory care](#) facilities are often regulated at the state level. To operate in a regulated state, communities must meet state-specific [requirements for licensure or certification](#). These laws and regulations may help ensure:

- Resident safety on the premises and when interacting with staff and each other
- Clear guidelines around the type and level of care a community is licensed to provide
- Staff qualifications, ratios, training protocols, and care practices
- A focus on quality assurance and continuous improvement

Senior living communities in regulated states are also periodically surveyed or inspected to assess compliance with state laws and following official complaints. Each state handles inspections a little differently, but most states make their findings publicly available online.

## How to review inspection reports

Even the best-run communities may have some violations. However, inspection reports can help you spot meaningful patterns or red flags. Pay close attention to:

- **Repeat violations.** Citations for the same issue in multiple reports can indicate a failure to properly address problems.
- **Severe deficiencies.** Violations that pose an immediate or direct threat to residents' health or safety warrant serious consideration.
- **Volume and scope.** A high number of citations or a broad range of issues may indicate operational or leadership challenges.
- **Community response.** How quickly a community addresses problems can show its ability and willingness to comply with state regulations.
- **Changes in ownership.** A poor inspection history under a previous owner may not reflect the current team's standards — or vice versa.

## Follow up in person

Inspection reports can provide helpful context, but visiting a community in person can give you a sense of what day-to-day life is like there.

### 4 steps to take when touring senior living communities

- 1 Ask about the most recent inspection results.
- 2 Inquire about how the community addressed any deficiencies.
- 3 Compare what you see with what's in the reports, if reports are available.
- 4 Talk with staff about how they receive and act on family and resident feedback.

A reputable senior living community will welcome your questions and provide honest, detailed answers.