

# A Guide to Selecting Elder Care Resources in the Mount Vernon Area

## AN OVERVIEW OF SENIOR NEEDS

Many elderly people who have lived here for years want to stay in their homes or in downsized residences during retirement to best enjoy their “golden years.” In addition, parents move here to live with or to be close to their children and grandchildren. This short guide is intended to help families and individuals evaluate the range of needs of elderly persons and options in the Mount Vernon area of Alexandria, Virginia. Questions are posed to stimulate conversations among family members and friends. We do not make recommendations for specific businesses or residential areas. A first step in this process is to contact the Fairfax County Office on Aging (<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/older-adults>).

Before we turn to specific topics, families are urged to evaluate the following basic issues:

- ✓ **The physical, emotional, and mental health** of the elderly person and his or her own assessment of their desire for aid. Do the family members and professionals consulted agree on the limitations and needs?
- ✓ **The financial and other resources** available to dedicate to care and assistance. Medicare generally does not help (except for limited financial coverage), and Medicaid requires stringent spend down actions. Family members need to assess their strengths and challenges.
- ✓ **The goals and aspirations** of the elderly person. At this point in his or her life what would they like to accomplish or experience? Are these goals realistic?

When these issues are examined everyone can turn to the following specific topics.

- **Residential options.** The cost of housing constitutes the most critical factor for all families and individuals, but particularly for the elderly who often live on fixed incomes. Northern Virginia is a desired area and all must compete for limited houses and apartments.
  - What percent of my income can I afford to dedicate to housing? One rule of thumb is 25%. Another metric is to add up all essential monthly costs (housing, food, utilities, loan payments, etc.). A general goal is to spend roughly 50% of the total available each month on these essentials.
  - Once the finances have been reviewed, what are the components needed or desired in a residence? Are senior friendly apartments, homes, or group settings needed or desired? Do I want to live in a neighborhood that is not age restricted with a mix of

singles and families? Do I need elevators or ramps? If driving is not an option, how close should I be to public transit stations or stops?

- **Rehabilitation and care.** Some of the larger facilities in the Mount Vernon area, such as Sunrise and Spring Hills, include multi-room residences with 24 hour care. Skilled nursing also is available at the Mount Vernon Nursing Center and Manor Care. The large Greenspring private neighborhood includes a continuing care element to help those with changing needs.
  - What are the most critical medical needs? Are dementia/memory care wings needed or likely to be needed in the future?
  - Do I need ready access to assistance? Should I plan on living in a larger place to provide room for 24/7 care?
- **Shopping and social opportunities.** Identify the major stores, malls and restaurants that emphasize senior care. Many venues exist in the larger metropolitan area for learning and recreation.
  - Many seniors are quite mobile and require minimal assistance. How close should you be located to entertainment or commercial centers? What transportation services would you make use of?
  - Isolation is reportedly one of the most serious problems facing the elderly in our society. Would you prefer to have large segments of time alone, or would you be happier with easy access to other people? Are you comfortable meeting new people?
- **Trends and related forecasts.** The Mount Vernon area is dynamic. Major transportation changes are occurring, Fort Belvoir has a larger role in the military's footprint, and pedestrian/bicycle routes are being developed.
  - If you live here, what can you expect to change? If you recently moved here, what have you left behind that is found, or is not found, in the Mount Vernon area? How important are those items or practices you left behind?
  - What are the personal goals you have as you either newly locate or realize you are entering a new phase of your life? Does this area have the resources you need to achieve those goals?

Hopefully this brief presentation will help the reader make the best decisions for their own care or the care of loved ones. This resource is provided as a community service from two organizations that have considerable experience in the area and have joined forces to care for the elderly. Questions? Contact Mount Vernon Companion Care at [mountvernoncompanioncare@gmail.com](mailto:mountvernoncompanioncare@gmail.com) or Logistics! Essential Assistance First at [keith.leaf1@gmail.com](mailto:keith.leaf1@gmail.com).