National Hotline Expects Surge in Senior Living Inquiries

July 1, 2015 by Cassandra Dowell

Housing is a major and growing concern for America’s aging population, and a federally funded help line for older adults already is fielding many calls about senior living options.

In 2014, seniors nationwide made more than 271,200 requests for assistance from the Eldercare Locator, a referral service providing information about care resources available in communities around the country.

The organization was established and is funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging, which is part of the Administration for Community Living, and is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). Its national call center operates during business hours five days a week.

For more complex caller situations, eldercare counselors provide additional support on topics including long-term care decision-making. These are known as escalated calls, the report, 2014 Eldercare Locator Data Report: A Snapshot of Older Adult Issues & Needs in America, explained.

Seven percent of calls are escalated to senior staff for handling, and of that, 37% are regarding long-term services involving education and guidance on senior services and facilities, data show.

“The third highest-ranked reason for contacting the locator was difficulty finding affordable and accessible housing,” the report said.

Of general inquiries, 15% of seniors are seeking information about housing. Of those callers, 60% wanted to learn more about senior living communities, data show.

The average caller is age 60 or older, is a first-time caller and—while the organization was originally conceived as a service for caregivers—over 70% of those contacting the center are reaching out on their own behalf.

“A combination of factors—living on a fixed income and changing accessibility needs which may require modifying an existing home or finding a new one—present significant challenges for older adults,” the report said. “As the gap between demand for housing suitable for older adults and available supply widens, the number of inquiries on this topic is expected to grow.”

Access the report here.

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