

2023 ORANJ Occupancy Survey – Highlights

Progress toward Recovery

A slow but steady return to normal is reported by the 24 Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) in New Jersey that are members of ORANJ, the umbrella organization of residents associations in those communities.

Its annual survey of occupancy in those communities shows that the total number of residents is now 9,252. The pre-Covid total in 2019 was 9,811, with higher occupancy rates. Over the past two years, occupancy by residents in independent living units (the usual entry point for residents) was down an average of just 5%. (Numbers are adjusted to account for two fewer members reporting in the current year.)

During the 2020 through 2022 years, the uncertainties of the pandemic plus fluctuations in mortgage rates and home sales discouraged senior citizens from deciding to move to these life-care communities. No occupancy surveys were taken in the high-Covid years of 2020/21, but there is general agreement that average occupancy rates in those years fell by ten percent or more. Since 2022, stepped-up marketing to seniors, improving economics and lower threats of Covid are improving the outlook for this growing segment of the population.

One significant change in accommodations provided by the state's CCRCs is the increased number of memory care units available to aging residents. Some 402 units are now available, an increase of 28% over last year, to serve the special needs of residents with cognitive impairments.

The current survey also brought to light that more than half the member communities are now managed by multi-location management-service groups. These provide reductions in costs for back-office functions such as accounting, financing long-term debt, purchasing, legal counsel, and marketing, as well as on-site administration and management.

One group, Springpoint Senior Living, increased the number of CCRCs it manages to seven in New Jersey. Fellowship Life now manages four communities, and Erickson Senior Living manages the three largest CCRCs in the state, serving close to 40% of the total resident population.

ORANJ has published annual occupancy reports since 2005, except for the two pandemic years. Reports of previous surveys are available at the organization's website: oranjccrc.org/research.

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