RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITY GUIDELINES
FOR PERMITTING AND LICENSING

RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES:
INTENT: This guideline is intended to provide the fundamental requirements necessary for review and approval of licensed 24-hour care facilities housing residential care clients.

PRE-INSPECTION: A pre-inspection of the home is recommended but not required. A pre-inspection can assist in understanding the process, fees, plans and code requirements. To schedule a pre-inspection call the West Sacramento Fire Department at (916) 617-4600.

BASES OF REQUIREMENTS: Residential Care Facility Requirements (Elderly) sometimes known as RCFE’s, or Community Care Facilities are intended to be “residential” facilities for a variety of groups and levels of care while maintaining a residential feel and look. The requirements for these facilities are covered in the California Building Code, California Fire Code and the California Health and Safety Code (CA State Law).

BASIC REQUIREMENTS:
FAIR HOUSING ACT (FHA) and AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA): The FHA addresses state and federal housing barriers and segregation by prohibiting housing discrimination based on disability, familial status, race, color, religion, sex and national origin. The definition of disability under the Act includes mental illness, developmental disabilities, physical impairments, persons with AIDS or HIV, and persons recovering from addiction who are not currently using illegal drugs. The federal ADA prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in all programs, activities, and services of public entities.

CBC CHAPTER 11A HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY: Congregate residences as defined in Chapter 2 of the CBC. Every applicable code section regarding accessibility is required to be fully addressed.

PREMISES IDENTIFICATION: House numbering that is clearly visible from the street is required by the California Fire Code. It is essential to fire and police to be able to easily and quickly find the residence. Please do this before submitting plans or calling for inspections.

FIRE SPRINKLERS: All new homes must be fire sprinklered. Bedridden and non-ambulatory clients must not be housed above the first floor. Existing occupancies may or may not require retrofit of fire sprinklers.
GARAGE AND HOME FIRE SEPERATION: The wall and door between the garage and living area of the home must be fire rated and the door self-closing except where the garage is part of the living space.

HOUSING BED RIDDEN PATIENTS: If the facility desires to house bedridden or non-ambulatory clients, other more restrictive requirements come into play and we recommend the facility retain the services of a licensed architect who is familiar for the requirements of residential care facilities.

SMOKE ALARMS: Are required in all residential occupancies and must be interconnected and have battery backup. There must be a smoke alarm in each bedroom, floor and hall way. Existing homes will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

HEARING IMPAIRED: Facility’s which house persons who are hearing impaired must be provided with visual alarm devices in sleeping rooms, restrooms and main living spaces.

SMOKE ALARMS: Are required in all residential occupancies and must be interconnected and have battery backup. There must be a smoke alarm in each bedroom, floor and hall way. Existing homes will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS: A multi-purpose fire extinguisher shall be provided in each care facility.

EXITING: At least 2 exits must be provided from the facility but are not required to swing in the direction of exit travel. Additional exits may be required based on type and number of patients and size of the residence.

LOCKS AND LATCHES: Doors must be openable from the inside without any special knowledge or effort.

EXTERIOR GATES: Must also be openable without any special knowledge or effort and must lead to a public way and be unobstructed.

ESCAPE WINDOWS: Are required for all new single family dwellings and must at least 5.7 square feet with a minimum 24 inches high and 20 inches wide to facilitate firefighter rescue. If bars or grills are provided, they must be equipped with emergency release devices and not reduce the minimum dimensions.

EMERGENCY PLANNING: In cooperation with the Fire Department certain RCFE type occupancies may require a staff training program in first aid, first aid, fire extinguisher use, patient exit methods, fire drills, disaster drills and documentation.

DRAPERIES, CURTAIN'S AND DECORATIVE MATERIAL: All drapes, furniture, decorations or other materials must be flame retardant.

OPEN FLAME DEVICES: Candles, kerosene heaters and similar open flame devices are not permitted in a residential care facilities. Exception: Gas Stoves and Furnaces designed and installed per their listing.

HOUSEKEEPING: Good housekeeping both inside and outside the home is critical in the prevention of fires and the accumulation of things that could hinder exiting or delay firefighter entry into the home for rescue.
ACCESS ROADWAYS: For Residential Care Facilities in rural areas, all portions of residential care facilities must be within 150 feet of an approved fire apparatus access roadway.

PLAN SUBMITTAL: We encourage the facility owner to submit plans especially if patients are bed ridden or non-ambulatory. We would like to see complete plans that address the items above.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Question: If a client becomes temporarily bed ridden, does that automatically change the facility occupancy or license?
Answer: No, but you must notify the City of West Sacramento and State of California Community Care Licensing Division within 48 hours that you have a bed-ridden client.

Question: How long may a temporarily bed ridden client stay in an ambulatory licensed facility?
Answer: Maximum stay is 14 days, at which time the client must either 1) become ambulatory; 2) facility has been brought into full compliance with the requirements for non-ambulatory or; 3) the client is moved to a fully compliant facility.

Question: Are all RCFE type facilities required to be fire sprinklered?
Answer: No. If for example an existing single family dwelling (R-3) is converted to a *Residential Care Facility for the Elderly (R-3.1) and the clients are not bedridden with no clients above the second floor, fire sprinklers are not required.

Question: Are all Residential type facilities required to have smoke alarms?
Answer: Yes. All residential occupancies, regardless of age or occupants, are require to have smoke alarms!

Question: How are smoke alarms to be powered?
Answer: All smoke alarms in new residential dwellings regardless of occupancy must get their power from the main home power system (utility power) and be provided with battery backup.

Question: Must all smoke alarms in a dwelling be interconnected?
Answer: Yes. All smoke alarms must sound, when one is activated.

Question: Is a manual fire alarm system always required in an RCFE type facility?
Answer: No. Generally a manual fire alarm is not required when the building is fire sprinklered however, there are exceptions to this rule, depending on type of clients and number of stories.

Question: Are there permit fees required in this process and how much are they?
Answer: Yes. Both the building department and fire department have fee requirements. These fees are based on a number of factors so please call each department to obtain the specific amount based on your project.

*Fire requirements vary based on a number of factors that need to be determined prior to conversion or permits issuance.