

Choosing an Assisted Living Facility

Choosing the right assisted living facility should be an involved and carefully thought-out process. Picking the right assisted living facility is as important as choosing a house or an apartment.

Visit the facilities you are considering, talk to the staff and residents, and read through any brochures and information offered. Make several visits at varying times of the day and week in order to get a complete impression of the facility. When you tour the facilities, pay special attention to the attitudes and overall friendliness of the staff and residents because they are potential housemates. Find out which state and federal regulations apply, and make sure that the facility properly complies with them. Most importantly, involve loved ones in making your decision.

The following are things to consider when choosing a facility:

- Is the community well-designed for residents' needs? Does it include safety features?
- What types of accommodations are available and how much does each cost?
- Does the staff greet you warmly? Do they call residents by name?
- Do residents socialize with each other and appear happy?
- Talk with some of the residents. Do they seem like people whom you'd enjoy getting to know?
- Is the food nutritious, appetizing, and prepared according to dietary restrictions?

Personal care and services:

- What professionals are on staff?
- What are their qualifications and availability?
- Are the supportive care services offered what you want and need?
- What social, recreational and fitness programs are available?

Licensing and costs:

- Does the facility meet local and state licensing requirements?
- What are the costs, including any additional fees for extra services?
- Do residents receive a written service plan that is periodically reviewed and adjusted?

Services and Activities

- Is socialization encouraged and promoted? Is it easy to socialize with other residents? Do lounge areas and a common dining room exist?
- What is the extent, range, and frequency of planned activities?
- Are there a lot of opportunities for transportation? How flexible is the transportation?
- Do opportunities for involvement with the surrounding community exist?
- How flexible is a resident's daily schedule? How much independence is allowed?

- Is the facility licensed by the state?
- Is the facility's administrator licensed by the state?

Equipment/Amenities

- What kind of opportunities do residents have to exercise?
- What types of amenities are available to residents?
- Is the facility equipped to support any special needs of the patient?
- Is extra storage space available?
- Is the facility located close to shopping centers and/or entertainment?
- Do the units have a telephone and television? How is billing handled?
- Is there a kitchen with a sink and refrigerator in the unit?
- Are religious facilities available?

Financial Considerations

- What is the monthly cost of the facility?
- What are the trends in rate increases over the past years?
- Is a deposit required? Is it refundable?
- What services are included in the monthly cost? What services have to be paid for separately? What other services are available?
- Are utilities included in the cost?
- What circumstances might force a resident to leave the facility?
- What kinds of opportunities are available for a resident to receive further care as a condition or problem requires?
- Is the facility connected with a nursing home or other kind of facility?
- What types of housing are available? (private/shared, apartment, suite)
- Is the housing furnished? If so, what is included?
- What types and what amounts of personal belongings is a resident allowed to bring?
- What happens if you are unable to pay for services?
- When can care services be terminated, and what is the refund policy?
- What are the payment, billing, and credit policies?