

Assisted Living: Personal Care

A checklist of personal and health care questions to ask when you and your loved one visit an assisted living facility.

Note: These checklists have been developed by The Consumer Consortium on Assisted Living (CCAL), a national, nonprofit organization dedicated to representing the needs of consumers in assisted living facilities and educating consumers, professionals, and the general public about assisted living issues.

Personal Care

In addition to the questions below, ask the facility to specifically describe how it will meet your known care needs, e.g., incontinence, mental health, supervision or dementia. If you hope to preclude having to move again, take into consideration that you may need more care in the future. Ask questions that don't apply to you now, but may in the future.

Meeting Individual Needs

What criteria does the facility use to determine whether this facility is appropriate for my needs?

What kind of assessment is done to determine my needs? What are the qualifications of the person conducting the assessment? How often is the assessment done?

What happens if my needs change - I need more help, become incontinent, become confused?

How does the facility tailor the schedule for bathing and dressing to accommodate the preferences of residents? Can changes be made?

How does the facility help residents maintain their abilities to care for themselves, especially in regard to toileting, dressing, and eating?

If a resident displays a difficult behavior, what steps will the facility take?

How often is the room cleaned?

Is there a schedule for staff to check on a resident's whereabouts and well-being?

Staffing

How many staff are there for each shift? What are their responsibilities?

What is the training/certification of the people who care for residents? What are the trainer's qualifications?

How many residents are assigned to each direct care staff person? What other duties do direct care staff have during these hours?

Are there direct care staff who speak English (or my native language) clearly?

Is there special training for staff about dementia and Alzheimer's disease? How long is the training?

Are staff trained to deal with aggressive individuals? Wanderers?

What if I don't like the staff person assigned to me?

What is the staff turnover rate?

Emergencies

Who decides whether to call 911? Are there written policies about how that decision is made?

What kind of emergencies are staff expected to handle and how are they trained

for them?

Health Care

While assisted living facilities are not designed to provide medical care, the facility should be able to meet the medical needs of their residents, especially if the facility has an aging in place philosophy. This philosophy allows residents to remain in the facility if they become more infirm, and to receive more care as needed. It is important to evaluate the facility's capacity to manage health care needs even if you are healthy now, because you may need more help in the future. Also, although many seniors are basically healthy, many take a variety of medications, requiring assistance or supervision.

Written Plans

Does the facility prepare a written plan describing how it will care for me? How often is it revised?

What professionals/staff are involved in the development of this plan?

How will I and my family be involved?

What involvement does a confused resident have?

What if I do not agree with the facility's plan of care?

Provision

To what extent will the facility monitor my health?

Is there a nurse on staff? What are the nurse's hours and responsibilities?

Who is responsible when the nurse is not on duty?

If a nurse is not on staff, are there regularly scheduled visits by a nurse or other health provider?

Does the nurse or provider see residents regularly?

If I don't feel well, how quickly and to what extent will I receive medical attention?

What health services are available on site: e.g. lab work, physical therapy,

wound care, hospice, social work, podiatrist, etc.? What does the facility provide, and what can outside agencies provide? What are the costs?

Under what circumstances and when does the facility call the family? The doctor?

Medication

What safeguards are in place to ensure that I get the appropriate medications on time and in the correct dosage?

How are prescriptions filled? Must I use the facility pharmacy? What are the costs?

Who gives out medications?

If not a nurse, how are staff trained and supervised?

Who reviews medication procedures and how frequently? What are their qualifications?

Transportation

Is transportation to health appointments available? Are there any limitations?

Is transportation available if I want to go to an event by myself or with a friend?

What are the fees associated with using the facility's transportation?

Is transportation wheelchair accessible?
