

Assisted Living: Quality Of Life

A checklist of questions dealing with socializing, meals, safety, and other issues to consider 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.

Activities & Socializing

When looking at the activities a facility offers, think about your preferences. Some people enjoy scheduled activities, such as current events discussions, crafts, bingo, card games, etc. Others have never been "activities people" and won't care to participate. They would rather read a book or go for walks. A third group may want to spend a lot of time at cultural or community events such as museums, theaters and concerts. The last group will be more concerned about location of the facility and whether transportation is available, its cost, and who goes on these trips. Look at a monthly activity schedule. Do the activities appeal to you?

How often are activities in the community scheduled? What staff are included?

Can I walk on the grounds? Are there protected/enclosed walking areas for residents with dementia?

How are religious/spiritual needs met? Is there transportation to my church or synagogue? Is there room and arrangements for worship programs in the facility?

Who develops and supervises recreational activities? What is this person's background?

How do residents have input into activities offered?

Meals

Meals are important to many residents of assisted living. Sample a few meals. How does the food taste? If you have special dietary needs, describe them and ask how those needs can be met. Ask to see a printed menu for the month. Does it look appealing?

What times are meals served?

What happens if I am late, miss a meal, or refuse a meal? Is the answer different if a resident is confused?

What if I want to skip a meal regularly? Is the answer different if a resident is confused?

Can I request to have a tray delivered to my room? Is there an additional charge?

If I don't like a meal, what are the alternatives?

For additional tools for caregiving or aging, visit www.CaregiversLibrary.org

Are snacks available at any time? What kind of snacks are available?

Does a nutritionist or dietitian review meals and special diets? If yes, how often?

Safety/Choice

Assisted living facilities emphasize independence and choice as vital to their philosophy. They also have rules and procedures designed to protect residents from harm. It is important to match your ability with the extent of choices and opportunities offered by the facility, as well as the limitations it will impose upon you. Facilities vary with regard to the extent of protection they offer residents and may use *negotiated risk agreements* or contracts when issues of safety and choice arise. Because each facility may define the terms differently, use a different term, or not believe in using such agreements, CCAL urges you to ask the facility whether it uses any form of negotiated risk agreements. If they do, they should clearly explain what they mean by the terms that they use and how they use such agreements in practice at the facility.

What safety measures are in place to protect residents from wandering away? Personal property being stolen?

What if I want an exception to a policy, e.g. signing in and out, smoking, or eating foods that are not on a prescribed diet? Is the answer different if a resident is confused?

Are background checks performed on all staff? What kind?

Which doors of the facility are locked and when? When doors are locked, how does one access the home? Are exit doors alarmed?

Are there safety locks on the windows?

Are there call bells in each room and bathroom? How often are they checked to be sure they are working correctly?

Is there a fire emergency plan? Are there fire drills? Are emergency plans publicly displayed?

Is the floor covering of the facility made of a nonskid material?

Facility Initiated Discharge

Answers to these questions will help you clarify a facility's ability to care for people with health and behavior conditions that are more difficult to manage. It will also help you determine if you have recourse if you are asked to leave.

What are reasons for discharge?

Is there an internal appeal process? What is it?

How many days notice is given and to whom?

How does the facility assist you if they proceed with discharge?

Accessibility

Are hallways, doorways, bathrooms and common areas fully accessible to people in wheelchairs?

If it is a multi-floor facility, what are the safety arrangements for escape in case of fire for people in wheelchairs?
