

# GUIDE TO SELECTING AN ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY

## What are the features of the community?

Amenities, services, and policies vary among assisted living communities. Questions you can ask:

- What amenities are included in the monthly fee and which cost an additional fee?
- What dining services are available? Can special diets be accommodated?
- What entertainment, social, and exercise activities are provided for residents?
- Is transportation provided to nearby attractions, shops, or restaurants?
- Is transportation provided to medical appointments?
- Are all inside and outside spaces wheelchair-accessible?



- Are there accommodations for couples?
- Are bedrooms and bathrooms private?
- What is the community's privacy policy?
- What safety and security measures are in place to keep individuals and possessions safe?
- What is the policy for pets?
- What are visiting hours and procedures for guests?

## Is the community licensed and accredited?

CARF International accredits assisted living communities. The accreditation process requires the community to follow a rigorous set of standards based on industry trends and to undergo an on-site survey to determine its conformance to those standards. Accreditation demonstrates public transparency and accountability, often going beyond basic licensure requirements. CARF accreditation offers you assurance that an assisted living community has implemented processes for regular planning, management, and review of its performance and is committed to providing high-quality care and services that are focused on the needs and preferences of residents and their families. Questions you can ask:

- Is the community's license in good standing?
- Is the community accredited? By whom?
- Is the accreditation status in good standing?

### Additional resources

Several associations provide tools for finding retirement living:

- AARP, [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)
- LeadingAge, [www.leadingage.org](http://www.leadingage.org)
- Other resources are available at [www.carf.org/Resources/ConsumerResources/](http://www.carf.org/Resources/ConsumerResources/)



When considering a move into an assisted living community, potential residents and their loved ones must weigh many factors.

This guide provides some questions you can ask the community before making a decision.

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AS-C-TF-06222021

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### Is the community freestanding or part of a continuum of services?

Assisted living communities can operate under two different models:

**Freestanding:** Operates on one campus without any other affiliated organizations.

**Part of a continuum of services:** Includes other healthcare or housing settings, such as a nursing facility or independent living, on the same or nearby campus.

### How does the community assess quality?

Assisted living communities may have unique philosophies on maintaining quality of life for their residents. Asking how they assess quality can help you find the right match. Questions you can ask:

- What is the philosophy of care?
- What are the staffing levels? What are staff members' qualifications?
- How is input from residents collected?



### What levels of care are available and what do they cost?

Many assisted living communities offer three or four levels of care. Levels of care are determined by the types of services a resident needs, and monthly fees might be tied to the level of care. Types of care include: assistance with eating, dressing, bathing, grooming, mobility, medication management, and continence care. Some communities also provide specialized care for individuals with dementia.

Not all assisted living communities provide all levels of care, so it is important to learn what services are available. Questions you can ask:

- What services are included in the different levels of care?
- How is the level of care determined initially and on an ongoing basis? How are transitions to different levels of care determined?
- How often do monthly fees increase? What is the average increase based on the last three years?
- How do you address memory care or continuum within your community?
- Will the monthly fee increase as the level of care increases?
- Which levels of care can be offered in the same apartment, and which ones would require a move to a different part of the community or a different facility?
- What additional services are available and what is their cost?
- Is hospice care available?
- If couples are at different levels of care, how is that situation handled by the community?
- What happens if a resident experiences a medical emergency?

### What are the financial qualifications for admission?

Financial options can be different at various assisted living communities. Asking about initiation/admission fees, financial assistance programs (such as grants, Medicaid, Veterans Administration benefits, or assistance from the community itself), and insurance coverage can help with your selection process. If you or a loved one has long-term care insurance, ask your insurance provider about their coverage in assisted living communities. Other questions you can ask:

- Is there a service initiation/entrance fee in addition to monthly fees?

- Is all or part of the initiation/entrance fee refundable? If so, under what terms?
- What types of financial assistance are available?
- What help can the community provide with securing financial assistance?
- What happens if a resident encounters a financial difficulty?



### How stable is the community?

Knowing the history and financial performance of an assisted living community can help provide piece of mind for residents and their loved ones. An accountant or financial advisor can help you assess an assisted living community's financial stability. Questions you can ask:

- How long has the assisted living community been in operation?
- Is the community part of a larger entity or independently owned?
- Does the community regularly disclose financial information to interested persons?
- How is the community's most recent audited financial statement, or annual report if it contains financials, available for review?