

Shopping for an assisted living facility

COURTESY METRO NEWS SERVICE

The decision to move yourself or a family member to an assisted living facility can be difficult. When men and women begin to experience difficulty with everyday activities, such as bathing, dressing or getting around, families may need to explore assisted living facilities.

Millions of people in North America reside in assisted living facilities. The majority of residents in senior living are those who may need assistance with one or two daily activities, but who are otherwise mobile and self-sufficient. Families faced with moving relatives into assisted living facilities can consider the following pointers to find facilities their loved ones will enjoy.

Consider the arrangements and services offered. Some facilities offer single rooms, while others provide apartment-style living. Most assisted living facilities provide a variety of services, such as housekeeping, laundry, exercise and wellness classes, and social activities, for their residents. Investigate the offerings at each home you visit, looking for a facility that best suits your loved one's needs.

Inquire about staff and their schedules. It is important to know how many staff members a facility has and how many people are working at any given time. Do staffing schedules differ at

night? If a resident has a particular rapport with one staff member, can he or she be requested? Look for a facility that is well-staffed and adept at dealing with elderly men and women.

Learn about individual service plans. Many assisted living facilities create individual service plans, or ISPs, for their residents to ensure individualized care is given. These plans are important for the safety and comfort of residents and also can help maximize a person's independence. Some communities offer memory care programs for those with Alzheimer's disease or other cognitive disorders.

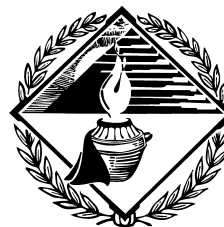
Consider the security in place. A good assisted living facility has a 24-hour support system in place and immediate access to care. Rooms may be equipped with emergency phones that can be accessed day or night. Many homes have check-in desks so that residents are accounted for when going on outings and for announcing guests.

Check on licensing. In the United States, each state has its own licensing requirements for assisted living facilities. Confirm a facility is licensed and that it meets the expectations of the local regulatory agency. In addition, check with the Better Business Bureau to see if any complaints have been filed against the home.

Assisted living facilities can meet the needs of people who cannot live independently but do not require the around-the-clock care of a nursing home.



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