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ASSISTED LIVING TIPS

Because assisted living regulations vary so widely from state to state, this is the senior living option families find most confusing. Keep these tips with you as you investigate your options and be sure to keep detailed notes on each community you visit.

1. Have a clear understanding of your family member's needs.

An honest assessment of your loved one's physical and mental needs isn't always easy to do. But it is necessary to help you understand what type of care they need. Are they able to bathe and dress on their own? What kinds of assistance do they need with their medications? Do they need laundry and/or housekeeping assistance? Knowing the answers to these questions will help assess what your family member's level of care needs are.

2. Ask lots of questions related to pricing and what is (and isn't!) included in the monthly fee.

Apples to apples comparison pricing is often tough to achieve when you are shopping for assisted living. Amenities and services vary greatly from community to community. While some communities have a set fee no matter what services are required, others have a base fee with what are sometimes complicated level of care charges added to the base fee. That is why it is so important to clarify what is included at each community. Ask what happens to the charges if your loved one needs more care and services? How much notice will they give if the monthly fee will increase? Are meals, laundry and housekeeping included in the monthly fee? Are there extra fees for medication reminders/assistance? Are there any entrance fees or move-in fees? Are there any additional fees for cable or local phone services? Don't be afraid to ask staff if there are any charges that you haven't asked them about. Also ask them what happens if your family member runs out of private funds.

3. Pay close attention to the staff and ask questions about their credentials and training.

As you tour, watch how the staff interacts with the residents. Do they know their names and talk with them respectfully? Ask to meet the administrator and ask him/her about the hiring process. Are staff given background checks? Is there on-going training and education after they are hired? Is there a licensed nurse on-site 24/7 or just on call? What are the staff to resident caregiver ratios?

4. Understand how the community handles increased level of care needs.

Because the regulations are sometimes broad in assisted living, how each community handles an aging in place resident varies widely. Understanding each community's policy is an important factor in selecting a community. Ask them how they evaluate resident needs and how often. How is that information communicated back to you? What additional services do they have available when the need arises? What kinds of conditions would require your loved one to transfer to a nursing home or other level of care? If a move is necessary, how much notice would they give you?

5. Investigate the opportunities for socialization and recreation.

The physical challenges assisted living residents sometimes have can lead to isolation if there aren't adequate opportunities for socialization. When you are touring communities, observe if there are any group activities or events. Are residents participating? Ask to see the events calendar and ask questions about planned activities. Are there planned opportunities for residents to go on shopping trips to area malls or out to local restaurants? Does staff go along to assist residents who need extra help? The evening meal is often an important part of the day for assisted living residents. Observe a meal. Do residents seem to be socializing and enjoying the dinner?

Call us at 866-342-4297 for more information on Assisted Living Communities in your local area. We can help you find the care provider that best meets your needs.